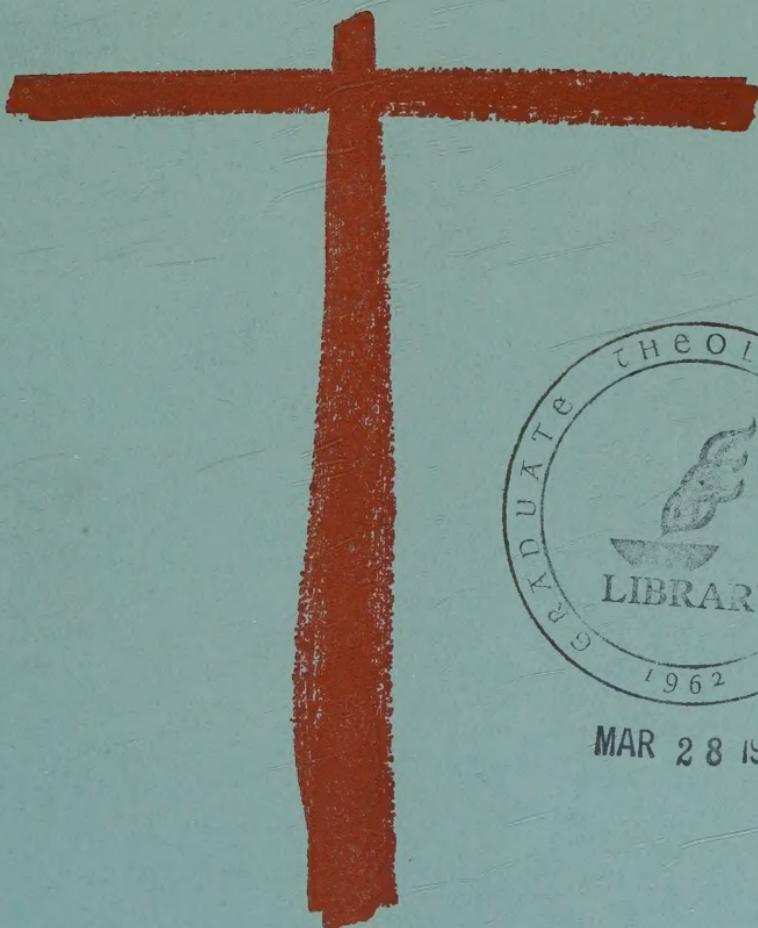


Humour

The Franciscan



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JANUARY 1979

The Society of Saint Francis

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THE FIRST ORDER OF THE S.S.F. EUROPEAN PROVINCE

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Pax et bonum.

157755

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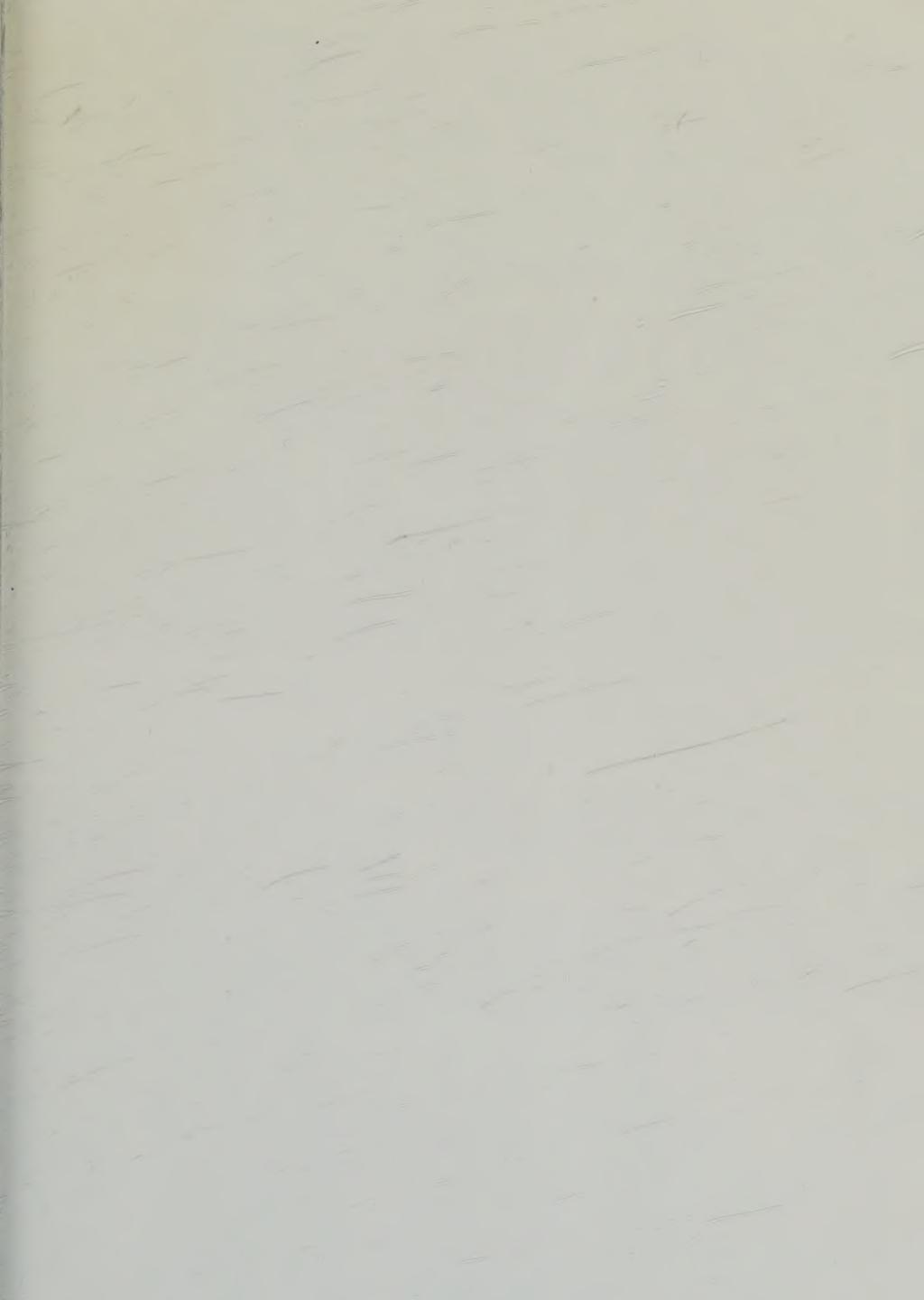
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- (Above) Novices and others at Hilfield during the Novice Conference in September.
- (Below) Brothers dancing at the Feast on the day of rededication of the Chapel at Alangaula (*see report in our last number*).



Innocent Merriment



IT may have been Charles Morgan who once wrote that a sense of humour was a handicap in the pursuit of ' singleness of mind '. Perhaps he was thinking that for serious ends one must take oneself seriously. But H. A. Williams has written recently of laughter as our perfect response to our acceptance by God.

Of course, laughter can be cruel. One thinks especially of flippancy, that defensive attitude which treats anything that appears to challenge or menace as if it were funny. Some more innocent laughter can arise from unkindness. To young children, the spectacle of an adult falling down (with or without the aid of a banana-skin) is excruciatingly funny—though perhaps that is their only comeback against those of superior size and weight ! It is not far from this to the humour of the circus or the early cinema, where other people's misfortunes are the source of the amusement. It is interesting, however, that some popular comedians of the screen whose image was that of the helpless, incompetent fool, began by being laughed *at* for their asininity, but gradually won the audience over till it was laughing *with* them, and rejoicing over their final triumph as over that of any brave hero.

The innocent merriment that Gilbert's Mikado hoped to induce was provided by justice being seen to be ingeniously done. If the sufferer has deserved it, one can laugh at him with a good conscience ! Perhaps the laughter which is most innocent is that against oneself, the enjoyment of which is not a display of masochism but arises from a sense of release as one accepts the joke. Two people who can laugh with each other at each other are really friends.

Most of our deepest insights appear to ' happen ' ; they may come at the end of a prolonged argument or process of reasoning, or they may apparently drop out of nowhere. But the insight itself seems to transcend logic and to be totally ' given '. Zen seeks for the intuitive truth by breaking the barrier of reason, and Zen is full of its own kind of humour. Many of the sayings of Jesus are given as the punchline in a short dialogue, very similar in form to a joke. So there is something, perhaps, in being genuinely amused that is like the receiving of some profound and unexpected truth. It overtakes us, so that we react with laughter, or with joy and gratitude, or perhaps with both. That being so, it may well be that, as Margery Kempe perceived, ' It is full merry in Heaven '.

The Minister General's Letter

My dear friends,

Freshly back from my time in South Africa I feel moved to tell you of one or two things that do not get into the news, probably because they are good news rather than bad.

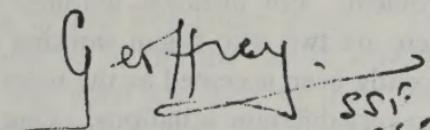
There is an organisation called *Compassion* in which one of our Tertiaries, Ray Carter, plays an important role. It came into being in 1969 to help people in rural areas in South Africa who were suffering from poverty and a seven-year drought, and it was inspired by the Quakers. Since those days it has grown and is now helping the poor of all races, working together in beneficial partnership transcending all national and ethnic barriers. One of their aims is to introduce soya beans to people because of their high protein value. The soya bean has been waiting in the wings, as it were, for five thousand years, but is now making its entry on the centre stage of life, and people are being taught attractive ways of using this 'Wonder Bean'. With a view to saving fuel *Compassion* has invented a 'Wonder Box' which is similar in function to the old-fashioned hay box or the thermos flask. The Wonder Box uses polystyrene as a more efficient insulator than hay to retain the heat. This means that food can go on cooking slowly which produces better results, and also without fuel once it has been brought to a certain heat. It also means that the soya beans, combined with a Wonder Box, provide perhaps the very best way for destitute people not only to survive, but also to keep healthy, and they can be a boon to people with heart or stomach disorders or diabetes. These simple techniques can be used with a great profit in many Third World countries, and also in affluent countries, where it is imperative to save fuel. Most of our friaries could by this simple method economise on fuel and so reduce our huge bills, and I commend it to all who are trying to live more simply, that others may simply live.

Again from South Africa I would draw your attention to a book by Edgar Brookes entitled *African Pilgrimage*. Edgar Brookes came to South Africa soon after the turn of the century and has lived there ever since. He loves the country and its people of all races. He has been involved in University life and the political world as a member of the Senate, and has lived through a great deal of South African history seeing it from the inside, as it were. He was a great devotee of Smuts, and believed in a multi-racial society. He worked for reconciliation

with the Afrikaaners and for a time embraced their doctrine of apartheid, though later he publicly recanted and became convinced apartheid as it was being applied was evil. He has spent the remainder of his life campaigning for liberal principles in a country increasingly dominated by the entrenched policies of the Nationalists. The story is sensitively told, and he does not spare himself in his criticism. A deep sadness comes through his writing as he is increasingly aware of the power of the Nationalists and yet can do no other than stay and provide a rallying point for such liberals as are still remaining in South Africa. Like Alan Paton, he believes in the rightness of his cause, and has elected to stay on, living in an agony of conscience, rather than leave and join the band of vociferous critics who denounce the Nationalist policies from the safety and comfort of countries far removed from the firing line. He particularly criticizes the British Universities for advising graduates to boycott South African Universities as he sees an enlightened liberal influence penetrating the universities as the one hope of influencing the rising generation of intellectuals to something better than the narrow Nationalist philosophies which grip them at present. There is great danger in the policy of isolating South Africa and her leaders as one is very aware how out of touch with world opinion many in responsible positions are in that country, and this could be disastrous in terms of wrong judgements and decisions. Every effort should be made to bring liberal influences to bear on every part of the life of South Africa if we are to avoid the holocaust which, if the present trend continues, seems inevitable.

To go on believing in the power of love, forgiveness and non-violence, as Edgar Brookes and others do, in the face of increasing polarisation and the escalation of hatred and violence, and to live this out actually in the place where it is happening is a particularly courageous form of martyrdom for it wins no applause but a great deal of misunderstanding and scorn, and is not relieved by death but has to go on living. Not a few in South Africa are witnessing in such a way.

With my love and prayers for you all,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Geoffrey S.S.F.", with a decorative flourish at the end.

Minister General.

Chronicle

Brother Michael writes :

EUROPEAN PROVINCE When at the end of his life S. Francis wrote his 'Testament' for the brothers, he began with a point of personal experience—his own human reaction as a young man at the sight of lepers. 'The sight of lepers nauseated me beyond measure ; but then God himself led me into their company and I had pity on them'. So began his life of service and love which together with a ministry of prayer and preaching became a characteristic not only of S. Francis but of his followers.

The same compelling power lay behind the life of Brother Douglas as he began his work for wayfarers, and remains a distinctive characteristic of the Society. It is rarely, in the first place, a calculated act but more frequently an instinctive, spontaneous, and sometimes wholly unexpected response to a cry for help. Perhaps it is because we know ourselves to be in need. Certainly some of the most effective ministries among our brothers and sisters is undertaken by those who have no professional qualifications and fit into no accepted category of 'social worker'. We learn as we go along, not necessarily a very tidy way of doing things. Trial and error inevitably involves painful mistakes as well as unexpected joys and triumphs. Because, so frequently, we don't know, have never mastered the jargon or the methods of what in the present world is a clearly defined and professional approach to the countless human problems of contemporary society, we are sometimes seen all too clearly as enthusiastic amateurs. Our only visible asset is a longing to care, a readiness to identify, and an assumption that we can give all our lives, night and day, to the particular need at hand as well as a love that begins with the person and not with the problem. As a consequence the range of our activities is rather wide. Apart from the houses which are located in places of obvious need, there are others who primarily by their presence are able to encounter individual men and women who are looking primarily for a person who will recognise them as something more than just another social problem. For instance, amongst the brothers in our London friary there are two who began working on a voluntary basis and who have recently been accepted as the more permanent members of the staff in two very different situations. One of them is now engaged in work for severely handicapped young children, the other in two of the London

prisons. Work in prisons is of course no new thing in the Society of S. Francis, and it is surprising how many brothers and sisters have been involved in this way over the years.

Occasionally we have found ourselves, almost by accident, pioneering in a field that had remained apparently unexplored ; or because the Society is composed of men and women from very varied backgrounds and former experience we can lend a brother or sister for a task which they had never expected to undertake. We never know what we might be doing next. ‘ There will ’, says Kazantzakis of S. Francis, ‘ be a leper on every road you take ’.

It was in some such way that we responded over ten years ago to provide brothers for a house which would aim at rehabilitating young men who had served sentences in Borstal institutions. With the enthusiasm of a Senior Probation Officer and a Borstal Governor as well as the expert advice and support of local authorities and a small committee, the house in Manchester Road, Ashton-under-Lyne was opened with Brother Mark, Sister Alison and Brother Jerome to run it and our first six residents who almost all came from the same Borstal.

Many other brothers have lived there with ‘ the lads ’ during the past years. We have learned a great deal, been humbled by the degree to which the men have responded, rejoiced in the marriages, shared in the pain of failure. In a later issue I hope a longer account of the Ashton House project will be published. At the time it started there was no other house quite like it, and in some ways that has remained the case. Without knowing it we were blazing a trail which others have followed.

The last two brothers to work there, Liam and Samuel, left this month. They have handed the house back to the committee and it is now being run for them by others. To judge the right moment to end a piece of work is as difficult to know as when to begin. In this case it certainly will not end, but be continued in perhaps a different way and with fresh insights. We can only be thankful for the many ways in which that house taught us about the very deprived world of the young offender and the love and suffering they have shared with us. The friendships we have been given by those who support this project has brought them within the wider circle of our Franciscan family. To mention any names in particular would be to run the risk of leaving someone out, we can only express our deep gratitude to them all. That we have lost something by leaving there is true, but at the same time there are many others asking us to ‘ come over and help ’ and as

the Principles suggest we shall always be glad to lend members of the Society to co-operate with others for the relief of any particular need.

Early next year Liam will be leaving for the Pacific Province where he hopes to join his brother, Daniel, in Honiara, and eventually assist the training of the growing novitiate at Alangaula. Samuel is to go to Hilfield to give support to the Mother House. It is of the greatest importance that we should have a strong centre in Dorset particularly at a time when new groups of men are coming to test their vocation with us.

In all my visits to the houses of this Province as well as in the opportunities I have had to meet students and others there seems a distinct shift of spiritual emphasis in the world and the Church. The more obvious moves towards renewal of a year or two ago have deepened into a genuine and generous search for God, or perhaps more importantly a readiness to be found by Him. As we draw towards the end of this decade there seems no room for complacency on the part of mankind. The same trouble spots erupt in many parts of the world, often with greater violence than ever before. The economic confusions of our Western world are a standing rebuke to the affluence in which we have for so long indulged.

Yet it is out of this background that the Church seems to be emerging with a new capacity to challenge the world with the fundamental powers of God's truth and love, a new attitude to poverty, a determination to recognise and use new patterns of communal living. As the three Orders grow in this country it seems as if we too are being challenged to recognise new ways of expressing our Franciscan vocation. Brothers and sisters, Tertiaries and Companions, friends, and all who care for the Franciscan way of life should be asking themselves searching questions and looking for the guidance of the Spirit as we are prepared by Him for the coming years. To look ahead in hope, and recognise Christ coming to meet us in his world may involve us in changes as radical as the change in the life of Francis when he met a leper on a lonely road.

From Hilfield, Brother Bernard writes :

We are grateful to our companions and friends at Sidmouth who made us so welcome on S. Francis Day, when the professed brothers had an outing, ending up with supper and a eucharist at S. Francis Church, Woolbrook. We had a picnic lunch together at Forde Abbey, where the older Mr. Roper showed us round very

beautifully. It has much of the atmosphere and grace of a Cistercian Abbey though little of the original structure.

Mark remains at Crawley Down for a further time ; Antonio left us to return to Glasshampton on 15 November : a week or so before, he had visited Nashdom Abbey, of which his bishop at Kobe is an oblate. We miss his calm confidence and spirituality and will pray for him as he continues to look for the right relating of contemplation and ministry. Incidentally, we are grateful to Alison Clarke of Newham who was able to talk over with Antonio ways of helping his Japanese tongue to get around our English sounds.

We shall miss Peter Douglas too, who has helped us to get our English tongues around the notes in chapel and hope that his love of singing and his ability to share it with others will spread sonorously in Glasshampton. Our chapel resembles Glasshampton's more now that we have rearranged the furniture ('what, again !' do I hear a reader mutter), so that the brothers are in two groups at either side of the altar, with the guests mainly at one end and the old high altar end (to which Father Algy introduced an 'old rose carpet' many years ago, stressing the 'old'—though it remains as rosy as ever) making a place where the brethren hasten for private prayer. The effect of the changes have been beneficial for singing and the common life and I find the chapel life at present a great joy. I am told that Brother Edward, after his recent visit to teach Church History, enthused too.

The brown brothers are to strike a further blow against Bill Lash and his 'black-power group' (*i.e.* the postulants !) by the clothing of James O'Neal and Raymond Lloyd on 20 December, at the end of the Southern Regional Meeting. We have four postulants at present and were very happy to welcome some of their parents recently, as visitors to the friary. Three priests are staying in Bernard House. We are very grateful for the charm and courtesy that Father Douglas Green has shown us in all the friary driving that he has been doing and we wish Father Beverley Coleman well as he continues his sabbatical before returning to Guernsey.

Someone remarked recently 'how do you manage to keep your gardens so colourful and alive so late in the year ?'. I answered 'by giving David Stephen a free hand !'—he was in Liverpool recently for the consecration of the cathedral, of which he is a canon emeritus. He will be at Glasshampton from December to March—a period happily coinciding with a time when even he couldn't expect to make much grow ! He makes a great contribution to our life. The colours of the leaves on the hill, around the swamp and in the gardens, have been glorious and, in certain lights, quite breathtaking. 'What a banqueting hall the Father has provided' Francis reminded Masseo as they sat in the open air eating the disgusting scraps they had begged from the rubbish bins of the rich. Kenneth reminded us of this story in a memorable S. Francis Day sermon : readers may recall the reference to the banqueting house in the Song of Solomon, 2:4.

Kenneth's sermon was a model of franciscan simplicity and power. Week by week, and most saints' days too, in the friary chapel the brothers strive to master the art of preaching and quite often 'it happens'. We get many invitations to outside preachments also, and we have been much engaged in mission this autumn. Angelo's sermon at the Tupsley mission was televised and he received many letters

THE FRANCISCAN

afterwards (incidentally, as we go to press, we hear that the friary service on 21 January is to go out on I.T.V. circuits at 10.00 a.m.). The Bishop Protector was with us for the afternoon recently and said how the mission team had taken the place by storm and how the fact that they were a team had come across as strongly as anything. It is an important part of our life here to equip our brothers for the life of prayer, mission and teamwork by the work of study. It is masters of a craft that are simple, with a profundity which carries conviction. The hard work of growing towards that is what our study programmes are about. We are hoping for a specially good lent term in this respect.

Keith has been on two missions this autumn, including one with the Guardian of the Third Order at Hadleigh, and I am writing in the midst of the Cranbrook mission, in which Donald, Brian Thomas and Pauline, together with Father Joe Parker and Mr. and Mrs. Woodward (old friends since my curate days in Spalding) are involved. When church people find themselves in house meetings with their non church-going friends, it is amazing how much they find they know and how much they find they want to know. I believe that there are many people who have fallen out with the church or fallen away from it for various reasons, who greatly welcome the opportunity to talk about the situation and the fact of God. As a preliminary to this mission, I was able to have a stimulating public discussion with Mr. Nigel Nicolson. The other part of the Cranbrook mission (which, incidentally, they called 'Welcome Week') was the miming of the sacraments with explanation. In the sacraments is a communication that can go deeper than words.

We have had some good Saturday day conferences at Hilfield for parish group leaders and Wimborne parishioners, as well as being host to a day conference of a Baptist congregation in Yeovil. In December, we are having to review our Yeovil work as unfortunately Gordon's back has flared up and he has in fact had to have a time in hospital with it. He is having to reduce the time spent in his London contacts, too, but the links with Brixton and Battersea will hopefully continue—Richard joined Gordon on his September visit and we look forward to the Battersea Camp after Easter. We hope Gordon will soon be better again. George Thompson (Brother Nathanael's father) has also been in hospital but is getting better; of course he isn't as young as he was. It is a joy that Owen is so much better and that he had a very good holiday with his brothers.

Juniper and Jacob's profession at the end of November is a highlight, followed at once by the week's visit from Canon John Townroe, then the retreats and Regional Meeting and Christmass. We are not inviting people into carols and supper at Christmass this year, but reverting to the older custom of Epiphany. Friday, 5 January and Saturday, 6 January, we hope, will see some bits of the former pageant revived and a rich celebration. Other dates that people may be glad to note are: 7 July, Hilfield Summer Festival; 27 July to 5 August, Families Camp (apply to Norman Hill for bookings); 11 to 19 August, Youth Camp, which we are hoping to make more of this year (details from Brother Barry Alban at Hilfield).

From Belfast, Brother Kevin writes :

As the long winter days draw near one is made very much aware of having to make a concerted effort to keep warm. Winter reminds me of the two little Winters kept by the Church—Advent and Lent. During these seasons we are called as

Christians to make a concerted effort to deepen our spiritual growth. It may look as if everything is rather dead in the coldness of winter but not so for the quiet on-going life is there preparing itself to break forth and radiate new life and splendour and signal another new colourful happening in God's wonderful creation. What a lesson for each Christian is seen in nature. If we use Advent and Lent seriously to commit ourselves more deeply to Christ, then a new spring awaits us—the blooming forth of renewed spiritual joys and a greater awareness of Christ's presence within. Surely this is what Francis was trying to show us—let us learn from God's parables that are all around us.

Our world needs hope—it is hope that has kept us going here in Belfast. Despite the long dark winter of ten years of pain and misery the real Christians have gone on hoping. Nothing has been lost because quietly behind all the suffering there is growth and a real awareness of Christ's abiding nearness. We go on hoping for peace because the Prince of Peace is here in the middle of this horribleness and he is revealed through the love and concern and many acts of kindness of his people. So despite our long winter, we see so many signs of spring. Please go on praying for our openness to God's will now and in the days ahead.

By the time you read this our Brother Augustine will have been professed on 30 November. He has now reverted to his own name, Ian Leslie. Reverend Alan Haire will have been professed to the Third Order and Brother Adam will have joined our family. We thank God for his many and rich blessings.

From Harbledown, Brother Adrian writes :

Present-day Canterbury is something very different from the Canterbury I knew some thirty years ago. Today it is a tourist centre, and in addition to the throngs of people from overseas, it is a University city with a variety of colleges and schools, faced with unceasing problems of accommodation and traffic control. It is inevitable that the Cathedral feels the full weight of tourism, and the numbers of visitors who mill through this vast and majestic House of God is second only to Westminster Abbey, and is at its peak in the late summer months. We are grateful to the Dean and Chapter for their kindness towards us, and the encouragement they give in a variety of ways. I specially value the day each week they allow me to spend in the Cathedral as a Franciscan presence, available to any who wish to seek counsel from a religious. Exciting things can happen on a spiritual level which make it thoroughly worth-while, and apart from becoming a 'talking point' for vergers, chaplains and guides, one is grateful for their friendship and co-operation in sending people who are in need, as they meet them. Over the months, I have worked out a plan of action, but I have come to see that being available in this way is just not enough. A cathedral buzzing with tourist activity, loud voices, uncontrolled children and not always well-behaved visitors, not to mention occasional bouts of organ playing, can be far noisier than any museum that so many suppose it to be. There is a crying need for prayer and quiet, not so much in hidden places, but within ourselves. We need to be seen at prayer if others are going to catch on. With this end in view, and inward shrinking, I am able to spend quarter-of-an-hour periods in prominent areas in the hope that ultimately this lovely House, like its Roman counter-parts, may become the House of Prayer it is intended to be, and this seems to me even more valuable than merely being available to people ; the two must go on side by side.

Giles has been away from us a great deal on mission work and through indisposition. He is with us again now on a greatly relaxed programme, which all hope will be beneficial to him.

Andrew Philip continues to work hard with local Youth Clubs, including handicapped children, and through this work some counselling comes his way.

We all rejoiced in Terry Cyprian's First Profession, which took place in early September in the Eastern Crypt of the Cathedral, followed by refreshments in Canon Allchin's beautiful garden in the Precincts. It was a quiet, but very happy occasion. As Public Relations Officer to the Dean and Chapter of the Cathedral, he is doing a valuable work, and in his capacity as a journalist he was present every day at the Lambeth Conference.

We are delighted to have Stanley with us again, completely restored to health after his operation for hiatus-hernia. He is exploring becoming a member of a lay team who befriend people who have had late breakdowns, and who live at Chaucer House as an intermediate stage before returning to normal life.

I am about to 'do time' in our local prison, the plan being that I should be a prison visitor one evening every other week. I had some experience of this work at my theological college, and look forward very much to taking it up again.

From Alnmouth, Brother Jonathan writes :

Since the last edition of THE FRANCISCAN a great many things have happened and it is difficult to pick out the really significant and important things, but they after all are pretty imperceptible ! But it has been a good time for us, with a gradual, but definite deepening of our life together as brothers ; a number of new areas of ministry and a gradual building up of contacts both old and new in the north east.

We have welcomed many different groups to the friary over the past few months ; we cannot mention them all of course, but certain ones come to mind. The group of confirmation candidates from Blanchland in the Durham diocese ; the quiet evening for the parish of Delaval and very recently the parish conference for S. Michael's, New Hartley, which was greatly blessed ; the quiet day for S. Michael's, Byker—some will say, 'do we go anywhere else other than Byker ?'. Well yes, in fact we do ! The P.C.C. visit from S. Gabriel's, Heaton and the good discussion I was allowed to share in on baptism policy. The visits from The Holy Sepulchre, Ashington, Warkworth Parish Church and Shilbottle. One of the really good days was the group from S. David's, Pilton who came for the day, together with our brothers. I myself am very much looking forward to going to S. David's, for their patronal festival on 12 January.

There have also been a number of other guests and visitors, of course, and it has been good to welcome a large number of new guests to Alnmouth—sometimes from great distances. We are particularly delighted to have made contact with Deerbolt Borstal and look forward to the first group of trainees who are coming in January. It was good to have the Governor and other members of his staff at Alnmouth in September for a few hours. Then, during the community retreat, we welcomed Richard Sigrist, the Chaplain of H.M.S. Caledonia, Rosyth. In former days visits to Alnmouth from Caledonia were very much part of the regular life of the Friary and so we are looking forward to resuming this contact. I am hoping

to visit the ship—so called—in February and then a group of the apprentices will come to us in May.

I know that Denis's many friends will be thrilled to know that, because he is so much better, he plans to leave the Friary for the first time since he arrived and travel to London, with John Derek, to attend the celebrations of an old friend at S. Paul's School, London—his old school and where he first met John Derek as a boy.

A number of brothers have been to see us and it is always good to have them with us. It was specially good to see Aidan again, who spent several weeks of his leave at Alnmouth. We would like to thank him for all that he gave us ; not least the various practical jobs he did around the house ! Another old boy, so to speak, was Edward who came to conduct the Community Retreat in September. That was a very happy week for us and the retreatants.

We have always received a great deal of help from our guests and especially those who stay some time. This summer, Stephen Roberts, from Newcastle in Staffordshire, spent the summer with us before going up to Kings, London. We wish him well. This autumn, Guy Loosemoore spent several weeks with us and also at Shepherds Law with Brother Harold—it was good to meet him.

This time of the year is always pretty full of events of course. But an event which is not of course an annual one, which gave us great happiness and joy, was Derek's Silver Jubilee of his priesthood. Many friends came to the Friary for a truly lovely celebration of the Eucharist and then we all had supper together—kindly prepared by our Tertiary sister, Deborah Haig. It was reported that the éclairs were seen in the mouths of many brothers ! But then in October, there were a number of very good days. There was the Third Order Families Day—which began with a celebration of the Eucharist, and was followed by a shared lunch. Before tea, I gave an address on 'The Gifts of Christian Faith' after which we had a good discussion and then tea and Evensong. We are currently looking forward to a similar day for our north east companions on 25 November. A whole series of meetings have been arranged for the next few months—the response has been most encouraging and we look forward to building up this part of the franciscan presence in the north east.

Our ministry to young people continues to grow. Jerome has been to Benwell School in Newcastle and Jonathan has been to Loretto School in Scotland—certainly a good mixture ! A number of schools have also come to see us and we were very glad to welcome the headmaster of the Royal Grammar School in Newcastle and his wife—who is incidentally, the brother of Murray Cox, our tertiary—and here again we look forward to re-developing a friendship between us. Rufus is going to visit the school in January. I have been able to establish a link with the university in Newcastle and am informally attached to the chaplaincy there. It means that I try to visit the university for twenty-four hours each week, although, of course, it isn't always possible. But I have been welcomed with great affection and interest by both staff and students. It is hoped that I shall be able to spend the night at one of the halls of residence—Eustace Percy—thereby meeting a whole group of students. In our programme for 1979—now published—a large number of events are designed for young people as we believe that this is an area where we want to share both our experience and the home we have with many different kinds of people,

but perhaps especially young people. By the way, if you would like a copy of our programme of events, then please write to me.

The painting goes on ! We have just had a week with no guests in order that the refectory can be re-painted and very beautiful it looks too. It couldn't have been done without the superb help of a group of men from Acklington Prison—where Marcus goes each Wednesday.

Because of the ministry that we are developing here—both with individuals and groups, in addition to our external ministry, we have felt it necessary next year to have two Community Weeks—one in March and one in November—when we will spend the time together as a family, looking in greater detail than is often possible at our life and ministry. To do this we shall need to be here and therefore not to accept outside engagements, or to receive guests. We hope that all our friends will understand our need for this time.

We continue to experiment rather with the timetable. One of the eternal problems in friaries it seems is having enough space to read, think and just be. In a way one hesitates to mention this as most of the readers of this magazine have to do so much more than we do, and somehow or other manage a full-time job, family commitments, active church-life and also time to read and reflect ! But perhaps we are not so well organised ; anyway, a real help to us to achieve this has been to have a cup of tea at 4.30, Evensong at 5.00 followed by the prayer-time and then supper at 6.00. For those of you who live in the north, this of course is normal. But we have found it really helpful. There is time to do all those things I mentioned and also it has enabled us to have a weekly Bible-Study and a Prayer-Group.

Our links with the diocese continue to be strengthened. A great source of inspiration and encouragement is our tertiary brother and bishop, Ronald. How good it was to have him with us in September for his own private retreat. We also extend our good wishes to Tony Duncan, the vicar of S. John's, Newcastle, where we have held the Rally for the past few years, and who has just been appointed the new vicar of Warkworth. The cathedral church of S. Nicholas and its provost, Christopher Spafford, have become closely linked with us, and in the new year we look forward to several visits from the young people who worship at the cathedral. In the autumn it is hoped to have a School of Prayer at the cathedral and for all this support and encouragement we are deeply grateful.

A number of us are preparing for missions next year. John Derek to Heworth in the Durham diocese ; Rufus to Bishopthorpe—yes, really !—in York ; Derek to Easington Colliery. We have also been glad to join the Association for Promoting Retreats in the north group and I am particularly glad that next autumn there is to be an A.P.R. retreat conductors course here at the friary. We also look forward to sharing in the Easter Monday pilgrimage to Durham cathedral and together with young people from S. Francis, High Heaton, Houghton-le-Spring and Chilton Moor, plan to provide an Easter celebration in the Galilee Chapel during the afternoon.

With all this varied ministry and activity, which is very challenging to us as a group as well as being exciting, we rely heavily on the prayers of all our friends. Do please continue to hold us up and also come and see us. We hope in the coming year to have some new members of the family ; and immediately, we welcome John Francis, who comes to us following his time at Glasshampton and a period

with Harold at Shepherds Law, who is such a source of strength and support to our life here.

From Compton Durville, Sister Teresa writes :

As usual there have been many comings and goings from this House during the autumn. Hilary has gone to San Francisco for a time, and we are very glad that Jean will be returning to us in the near future. Mother and Bridget have been in America for a month during which time they attended the First Order Sisters' Chapter in San Francisco. Catherine Joy who is expecting to make her Life Profession at Compton before the Bishop Protector on 28 November will also be returning to San Francisco when she can get the necessary visa.

Bridget Upton was clothed as a novice on 24 October, taking the name Eleanor Bridget, and Lynda Mary is hoping to make her First Profession on 19 December. Sheila Smith has been admitted as a postulant. Sheila is a P.E. Teacher and has recently been a member of the Lee Abbey community for a year. Skeena is currently doing her stint as a novice at Hooke (going to and fro on a Honda) and Susan is expecting to join the Birmingham House in December.

The House in Dover has been having a difficult time lately as Mildred has been unwell, so Veronica has been helping out there for the past month. Our sympathy goes to Barbara who recently lost her brother.

All our accommodation at Compton Durville is being very well used. We have many groups coming for retreats or conferences as well as a large number of individuals ; the Home continues to flourish though on a small scale. We are building up very good relationships with Bishop Fox School in Taunton and are finding that there is much to be gained on both sides from this link. As a family we are planning another Community Week in December when we are 'closed' to other guests and engagements and can just be together as a family. During this week we can adjust the timetable to suit ourselves and have opportunity for a good deal of thinking and discussion (and some playing) in order to take stock of our life together.

From Cambridge, Brother Martin writes :

Brother Barnabas left Cambridge to begin his new work in Manchester at the end of September. The people of Saint Bene't's Church gave him a massive farewell, and they clubbed together to buy some of the books that he needed for his new work.

Brother Jacob took part in an interesting project in August. He assisted with a camp for families from the Diocese of S. Albans, which was designed to provide a holiday for those otherwise unable to have one. Everything was laid on, from baby-sitters to Bible studies. The camp was at Weston-super-Mare, and Brother Jacob's fame as a cook had reached the organisers.

Brother Jacob has also been giving valuable help to the Cyrene Community in Cambridge. He will be greatly missed when he leaves Cambridge at the end of December to take up his new work at Plaistow.

Brother Christian continues as a student of Theology at Corpus Christi College, and he regularly assists the Dean with the services in the College Chapel. A small

group of fellow theologians from this College meets on Thursdays for a tea-party and time of discussion, in which Brother Christian plays a prominent part.

Several members of Saint Bene't's Church are meeting weekly for Bible study, under the guidance of Mrs. Daphne Brink (one of the congregation). At present they are embarking upon a course of study on Saint John's Gospel, with the aid of Brother Barnabas' commentary.

Mr. Roney, the organist, has formed a group of singers to render various motets during the administration of Holy Communion on some occasions, which has brought some enrichment to the Sunday worship. Saint Benedict's day (7 July) was observed with the usual evening Sung Eucharist, but was followed by a buffet supper. Several College Chaplains preached at the Sung Eucharist on Sundays during the summer vacation.

From Plaistow, Brother Victor writes :

The high wall along one side of our garden is a blaze of rich red leaves at the moment. The amazingly simple but ingenious layout of the garden is a constant source of surprise and peace to the brothers and our many visitors, surrounded as it is by a garage, a public bath-house and the constant noise and bustle of the East End.

Because of uncertain weather last year the garden was not used as much as we would have hoped, but the house continued as a base for much activity and meeting, not all of which, we hope, was wasted.

It was good to be able to host a weekend for aspirants in October and to thank God that he is still calling men to serve him in our brotherhood.

Other notable events have been an enjoyable celebration to mark two anniversaries, Brother Michael's thirty years in profession and Brother Donald's twenty-fifth anniversary of ordination, with thanks for the kind assistance of the people of S. Philip's, Plaistow ; and a visit by the Bishop of Barking to share in our morning programme, as part of a two week visit to the deanery of Newham.

Brother Nicholas is now fully back in harness after convalescence following his heart operation, a remarkable recovery, due in no small way to the loving care of Donald and Jean Field, two members of the Third Order for which we are deeply grateful. We are sure that the local children are as pleased to see him about as we are.

Brother Justin has added a regular commitment to the men of Pentonville Prison as part of his now considerable work in this field of ministry.

Brother Simon has left us to continue his studies after doing some good and much appreciated work in a dockland parish, and Brother Crispin has come in his place. Crispin is giving Brother Damian some much needed secretarial help, and is hoping to extend the ministry and involvement of the brothers in the area with a special concern for the possibilities of lay training and ministry.

The parish churches immediately around us have made a commitment to forming a team ministry. We have been invited to share in this, and look forward to discovering with them what this might mean.

From Edinburgh, Brother Malcolm writes :

Three happy events have recently taken place in the life of the friary. On Monday, 27 November, Brother Juniper made his Life Profession at Hilfield Friary in the presence of the Bishop Protector and on Saturday, 9 December, at S. David's Church, Pilton, Edinburgh, Brother William Henry made his Life Profession in the presence of the Primus of the Episcopal Church in Scotland. In the early part of December we welcomed amongst us Brother Albert who has arrived here after finishing his time at Glasshampton. Albert's arrival has made things a lot easier for us all and has enabled us to share out the work load more equally.

Much of our work and ministry continues as before but we do find ourselves beginning to explore new areas of ministry ; recently Brother William Henry has been elected to serve on a number of important committees dealing with the life and problems of the Pilton area. It is good that the brothers are involved in this way in the Pilton scene.

Between us we are fulfilling an increasing number of preaching and teaching engagements in many parts of Scotland ; this of course makes the presence of the Society more widely known and we are grateful for the opportunities that are given to us.

If you are ever this way for a winter holiday please do drop in to see us and please remember us in your prayers.

From S. Francis School, Hooke, Brother Anselm writes :

It is sad to relate that since the departure of Lawrence Christopher, over a year ago now, we have been without a permanent priest brother. Brother Crispin is with us at present for his second spell as our chaplain (on a 'visiting' basis), and for six months we were blessed by the presence of Brother Aelred William. However, it's an ill wind . . . , and we have been able to extend our knowledge of the brothers in general as Hilfield have been a great help in providing a priest three times a week in the lean periods.

We are noticeably an older school than we once were, and in fact only twenty of our forty-nine boys are under fourteen. They are coming to us at a rather later stage these days, and this will eventually and gradually bring about changes in the school—we sometimes think that some of the boys have been with us so long that they have got rather bored and 'stuck'—no doubt we shall discover that a short stay, too, has its problems !

The headmaster has to report that his time in that position is drawing to a close, and that steps have been taken to find a successor. The next head is not to be a friar, and this is bound to lead to quite a different kind of Franciscan witness and involvement in S. Francis School—please pray that God's will may be done here, in this and in all things.

From Ty'r Brodyr, Brother Vincent writes :

I am beginning these notes while on a brief visit to Glasshampton, our house of prayer in Worcestershire.

Earlier in the year Brother James, the senior member of our Welsh family, was taken here by Brother Nathanael so that he could take part in a community retreat,

whose leader was Brother Alban. For the return journey James was accompanied by Brother John. As always we enjoyed having John with us but alas the time soon went before we had to make our farewells and let him return to Glasshampton.

Throughout the summer months we have had a succession of guests and visitors to the House. Among the guests that have stayed here, have been a number of priests, some from outside of Wales, who have just wanted to share in our life, or worship and work, rather than make a formal period of retreat. One priest who stayed with us proved to have a tremendous gift of fun and 'leg-pulling'. This resulted one lunch-time in us all being 'taken in' by a small flower described as somewhat rare, which later we were told was a weed from our driveway !

In June we had a visit from Mr. Thompson, Brother Nathanael's father and with him from Hilfield came Alan Wippell. Since Mr. Thompson was with us he has been quite seriously ill and has needed to have an operation. However, he has made a good recovery from this.

Shortly after their return to Dorset we had Professor Cecil Lewis come and spend a weekend with us. He had come over from Hong Kong where he is director of postgraduate medical education at the university and had come into contact with Brother Geoffrey, the Minister General. Next year Professor Lewis is hoping to pay us another visit.

From a different profession and with quite a different set of skills I invited Mr. Frankie Holmes, a comedian, and Elsie his wife to come and have a meal with us. I had met him in Llandudno while doing some shopping, being mistaken for Brother Raphael, whose name and address they had been given by a mutual priest friend. I later learnt that Frankie was top of the bill at one of the local theatres. Through his kindness and generosity several members of the family were able to see him perform, and were invited back-stage.

In September we were hosts to the local tertiaries, who came to us for an evening Eucharist at which several of them made their professions including our very good friend Mrs. Jean Booker. After refreshments had been served, Brother Edward, the T.O. Chaplain, showed some excellent coloured slides of some of our houses including some views of Ty'r Brodyr which I had not seen before.

As well as welcoming guests and visitors to the house, it does seem that in a quiet way the house exercises an increasing ministry of counsel and advice to those in need. Some of those who come are sent to us, while occasionally others just turn up.

Finally, I must mention the Feast of S. Francis, 4 October. Over the last two or three years it has become the custom to invite our good friends the Sisters of S. Mary from Craigside, Llandudno, to visit us that day. This year it was an additional joy to welcome the Sisters of the Institute of the B.V.M. from Abbey Road, Llandudno who run a Retreat and Conference Centre—so that with our two Sisters, Gabriel and Jannafer, the morning of the Feast was very much a Sisters occasion.

From Maranatha, Brother Thaddeus writes :

Towards the end of September we welcomed between eighty to ninety friends, to share with us in an evening house-warming, Eucharist and celebration, Doctor

Una Kroll giving the address ; and later our old neighbours from Ashmore Road provided reggae and soul amplified to the traditional tremor !

Since then we have been hosts to numerous groups and individuals. Rowan Callick working with Wantok Publications and known to some of our brothers, spoke with enthusiasm of much that is happening in Papua New Guinea ; and also Francis Khoo a young lawyer and Christian of Singapore living here as a refugee. Through one member of the house's involvement with Oxfam and Christian Aid some people from India, Eritrea and Nigeria, who are studying or living in West London, with some of the organisation's workers, have come to the house along with people involved in, or living in, our own locality : sharing some time, some food and something of themselves with us. Such exchanges have been found valuable, not only for the sake of prayer, praise and intercession but also helpful towards understanding and accepting others whose values and traditions differ to our own.

One of the people in the house hopes to be part of a small group living in Brick Lane, so it was appropriate to be with Ken Leech the day of the N.F. March. It was good to witness on the first Sunday of November the dedication by the Bishop of Edmonton of a small U.S.P.G. Root group in his area.

As for the house itself, the occupancy of short life property is much like backing horses ; every now and again you back a loser. We hoped for eighteen months to two years, but at one point someone in the housing association mumbled 16 December. However, that will not be so. The tenants association continues with its regular meetings and now a small group of young West Indians use one of the rooms. We have also been able to offer temporary accommodation and office space to a local community worker and a social worker, working in the housing action area of Ashmore Road. So the number of people residing in the house has risen to seven though as might be expected we are rarely all together. At the time of writing one member is in the U.S.A. covering the Roman Catholic Women's Ordination Conference and another doing a residential fortnight at Reading hospital, though their places have been filled by two young Catholics visiting London schools on behalf of Young Christian Students.

We look forward to a quiet stretch and time to reflect upon our action and involvement, that is our means of mission and to hear the comments of our friends and critics. Also in the near future we are to be hosts to the West London C.A.R.A.F.

From Newcastle-under-Lyme, Sister Eileen Mary writes :

Christmas at Greystones S. Francis seems to be shaping into a pattern now. There are the usual festivities and we attend S. Andrews for the Christmass morning. All this is preceded not only by a general sharing with our guests in the decorating, but also an hour of music, readings and quiet round the crib in a candle-lit chapel on Christmas Eve.

Talking of the chapel reminds me of a lovely gift. American Tertiary Caroline Banks and her husband Warren came to us in the summer, very kindly bringing with them a beautiful twenty-eight inch reproduction of the San Damiano Crucifix. It is very right in the chapel, and has even been with us for talks away from the house—not least for the teaching fortnight in Cottingham too !

Another much appreciated present is a freezer which has been given us by the local deanery. It fits perfectly into the end of the laundry—getting it in was a different matter ! It is proving a great help in catering for our larger groups and it will be a relief not to be baking quite so many cakes in the week before our Festival Afternoon—19 May, 2.30 by the way—hopefully it will be another occasion when Companions and Tertiaries will join the brothers and sisters in welcoming all our friends.

S. Francis Day marked a very happy link with the local Roman Catholic Tertiaries when they joined us for a party at the house with our own Tertiaries. It was good, too, that Lynda was able to be with the Companions when they met in October at Shelton S. Jude's.

From Mtoni Friary, Brother Ninian writes :

‘ Moto imeaka leo, Moto ni kazi ya Yesu ’. This is the first line of a Swahili song which is sung throughout East Africa : ‘ The fire is burning today, fire is the work of Jesus ’. This has certainly been true here at Mtoni ; the Spirit has certainly been at work in our lives, and we pray for a continued renewal in our lives and work.

September saw the visit of forty young people from Dar es Salaam who came for a two day seminar on ‘ The Work of the Holy Spirit in our lives today ’. This time was much blessed and concluded with an all night vigil of prayer and praise in the form of singing, testimony and prayer, and it culminated with Mass.

We also have to give thanks for the life professions of Petro, Wolfram and Amos, and for the first profession of Leonard. We pray for them and we give thanks for all that they give to the community.

Brothers Geoffrey, Damian and Benedict have all spent some time with us during the months of September and October and we are grateful for their visits : it was also good to see Billy Dove, an old friend of the Society from Toynbee Hall days, who was visiting S. Mark’s Theological College. Victor John arrived here in September as the priest brother whilst Hugh is at language school. He has settled into the life very well, and is a great support to us all.

Thanks are also due for all the new contacts which have been made in the secondary schools in Dar ; for the continued friendship with the Capuchin friars in the city and for all the guests who come to visit us.

Brother John Charles writes :

PACIFIC PROVINCE I have visited New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and the Solomons since I last wrote.

In New Zealand we are already in consultation with the Auckland diocesan authorities about a new house, a move which will have to be made once David John stops being vicar of Glen Innes. Pray that the right house may be found and the right apostolates for the brothers, as well as the generosity to help sustain. Colin James will go to Brookfield for a year in December.

During my visits to Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands I have been accompanied by Miss Lily Best (the famous 'Tiger Lil') who has been taking photographs of us, our life and work so that we can later produce an audio-visual aid of the Pacific Province. Like a mountain goat she has scaled heights of our chapel and gained a quasi-heavenly view of our worship. Every chair in every room has served as an elevator for the photographer's vision.

In Papua New Guinea, Kabay has been transferred to lik lik hap which is not only a move towards the re-establishment of a fuller 'presence' in Port Moresby, but also a jumping off place for what we hope will be his regular visits for evangelistic purposes to his home, the Torres Straits Islands. At the end of the year, Francis Damian will return to Brookfield and Gerard will go to Haruro. Pray for our growth at Haruro, so vital, we believe, to the church in Papua New Guinea. At Alangaula we will need to think seriously about further experience for the older novices and the development of their ministry of service.

Two elements of our life in the islands need your prayers as we face the future : the provision of novice guardians and those who can train up indigenous novice guardians, and a sufficiency of vocations to the priesthood as will maintain our sacramental ministry.

The four of us, Martyn Francis, Peter, Masseo and myself, who are to be involved in the new foundation in Australia have begun a fruitful process of consultation which we hope will continue once we settle into our new house. It has been good to settle down together and to work out our aims and hopes in the light of the general direction given to us by the last Provincial Chapter. The minutes of these co-operative discussions may well be useful to others in future. We realise that what we plan may very well need drastic adaptation in an actual situation, but these changes are likely to be more easily made on the basis of a common mind about our purposes than on the spur of the moment. This approach means that our expressed aim will in large measure determine the house we choose rather than vice versa.

As we start from scratch we would be grateful for offers of books likely to be useful to us and of any practical help our Australian readers may be able to offer. We hope to support ourselves by part-time jobs and to be a real centre of love. But as I write this we have no house yet, and nothing to live off, though we have about nine months rent

(thank you Minister General). We trust in God and the generosity of his people. Pray for us.

From Papua New Guinea, Brother Alfred writes :

During September, Francis Damian and Hilarion went on patrol in the Siane area of the Eastern Highlands. On S. Michael's and All Angels, three young men were made postulants, Samuel, from the Popondetta district and Alexander and Douglas Gill from Menapi. Geoffrey Francis who was due to be made novice then had already withdrawn.

The brothers at Haruro kept their festival on 8 October, the preacher was Father Isaac Gadebo, a companion, who is working at Kimbe, a large oil palm development in New Britain. Isaac has been a companion for many years, his first contact with the brothers was when Brother Charles visited Martyrs School while he was a pupil there. After a breakfast cooked momu style, three small plays were performed by the brothers. These were adapted from the Little Flowers by Philip who spoke afterwards about the Society. It's difficult to know which appealed to the crowd most, Timothy Joseph dressed as a woman, or Alfred as Francis having a bowl of water thrown over him !

Since August, Kabay has been at lik lik hap where he is developing a ministry from the house and within the various parishes. Andrew has now left for Lagos where he will be working, on a scholarship, for six months, gaining more experience in mental health work. It is hoped that a young man who wants to join us and who is at present in the police force in Port Moresby, will spend the next few months with Kabay as an aspirant before going to Haruro. Andrew's absence influences the province financially as a large part of his wages has been going to the Provincial Fund for the maintenance of Alangaula and Haruro.

At the beginning of November, Alfred came to Port Moresby for an operation for an hiatus hernia, the operation was successful and after some time at lik lik hap he will be returning to Haruro by the end of the month.

On 29 November, Francis Damian will leave Haruro to return to the Brisbane Custody. We are all very grateful for his time with us especially the period when we were very short in numbers. Hilarion will be travelling to Brisbane with him to attend a religious life conference and spend some time at Brookfield. He will return with Gerard at the end of January. Gerard is joining the Haruro Custody for two years. At the end of October we were like the Old Woman who lived in a shoe ; Alfred conducted the Popondetta Diocesan Retreat at the friary and we had the Bishop and thirty-five clergy living with us for three days. We were helped by some good ladies who cooked the vegetables in the afternoon for the main evening meal but nevertheless everyone was kept busy.

From Alangaula we hear that :

Life here is partly broken up by the arrival and departure of ships. This doesn't happen every day but when one does come everybody goes to the beach unless we are in the middle of the Eucharist or an office. All want to see if any of their friends are on board and most of us seem to have friends among the crews.

On 24 August, S. Bartholomew's Day, the smallest of the church ships, the M.V. 'Charles Fox' arrived with four of our brothers. Randolph was returning from leave in Papua New Guinea, Daniel was coming to clothe two more novices, Stephen Lambert was paying his first visit since arriving in the Solomons, and John Charles was visiting in his capacity as Minister Provincial.

That same evening Andrew Patteson and Philip Marsden were clothed as novices between Evensong and the Eucharist, bringing the number of novices here to ten. Andrew Patteson is the third Tikopian to join us, and Philip Marsden is the first New Hebridean. Both are in their early twenties.

John Charles and Stephen Lambert were able to stay with us for a month, during which John Charles gave a full course of lectures to the novices on the subject of the Holy Spirit and the current charismatic renewal movement. Stephen Lambert talked to us about Africa on one evening and about Brother Douglas and the early days of S.S.F. on another. He was also able to help our friends Aliki Anisi and Rudguard Siau to complete the new guest house.

For the Feast of the Stigmata of S. Francis we were joined by the staff and students of Pawa Secondary School, where the brothers minister, as well as by a number of other friends on the island. The students' choir enriched the singing and some of the boys served at the altar. After the Eucharist, at which the celebrant and preacher was Brother John Charles, all went to the guest house which was then dedicated in honour of S. Clare. The first visitor, Miss Irene Markham, was already occupying the house. She was in Papua New Guinea for ten years and has come to Alangaula for a few weeks to undertake the typing of lecture notes for the novitiate which may be published and printed for use within the churches of Melanesia and Papua New Guinea. We are immensely grateful for what both Lily Best and Irene Markham have been doing for us. After breakfast nearly all took part in various sporting events, soccer, volley ball, table tennis, and even snakes and ladders. All shared in a custom feast on the beach later in the day.

As these notes are being written the M.V. 'Charles Fox' is seen approaching the bay, this time with Father Harry Tevi who is coming to spend a month with us to prepare for his consecration—he is to be the assistant bishop of the New Hebrides, and perhaps also with Brother Robert Wobur, head brother of the Melanesian Brotherhood, who hopes to spend a short time with us.

Brother Stephen Lambert gives his impressions on returning to the Islands :

Port Moresby, after an interval of thirteen years was almost unrecognisable with a whole new suburb at Waigani in which many new administrative and commercial high rise buildings have appeared and the University complex, a new Museum and a library, a gift from Australia with ten thousand books.

Since Port Moresby is now a rapidly expanding capital city with the headquarters of almost every organisation in PNG, it is greatly to be hoped that a new role can be found there for S.S.F. as soon as more PNG brothers become available.

A short visit to Haruro convinced me that we may have to wait some years for this to happen since there were only five brothers, two of whom are expatriates and one novice and two aspirants.

Newton College, the Provincial Seminary, now occupy the former Evangelists College but a large new Seminary is being built at Jonita, quite near and the Christian Training Centre, on the site of the mission Farm is also being developed. Perhaps we tried to do too much too soon in PNG but when we came in 1959 there was only one priest, an Australian, in Port Moresby and there were quite a number of Papuans who wished to test their vocations. We were strongly pressed to start and run the Evangelists College and a very useful job was done there for about ten years. It was a tragedy that it had to be closed for lack of funds to pay the catechists and that so few Papuans have so far found their vocations with S.S.F.

It is greatly to the credit of the brothers, particularly Philip, Brian, Andrew and Alfred that so much has been achieved of lasting value to the Church in PNG and that there is still a well-equipped friary and many opportunities open to us when a new generation of novices comes forward for training. This will have to be done by indigenous brothers in their own way but they will need a lot of help from outside for many years to come.

Patteson House at Honiara is rather like Koke was in the early days but without the responsibility for the school or the pastoral work among the migrant workers since the indigenous Church is much stronger. There are many priests and Melanesian Brothers and the lay people are much more motivated and better instructed.

They are very friendly and devout and all the churches and centres of worship are very well attended and well maintained.

The house is much used as a hostel for young men in or out of work and the brothers are involved in all sorts of religious and social work in and around Honiara and on Missions on other islands.

The Sisters of the Church are also much appreciated and have a number of novices from the islands at their noviciate house about fifteen miles from Honiara.

AMERICAN PROVINCE

From San Francisco, Sister Cecilia writes :

In November we welcomed Mother Elizabeth and Sister Bridget to S. Francis House and the Community's first First Order Sisters Chapter was held. We were very happy that this meeting took place in the American Province and that yet another sister from Compton Durville was able to share our life for a short time. Mother and Bridget greatly enjoyed the sights of San Francisco and we all went off to the Redwoods for a week-end retreat led by Brother Robert.

Thanksgiving Day was duly celebrated at the Bishop's Ranch by all the sisters and brothers in California—a lovely, family get-together.

Sister Jean has been transferred to the European Province and we wish her much blessing as she takes up the threads there.

Our prayers and good wishes for 1979. Loving greetings from us all.

Letter to Companions

The Friary
Vicarage Road
Llandudno
LL30 1PT

January, 1979

My dear Companions,

The renewal and re-ordering of the Companions is beginning to touch some areas, but to those of you whose areas are as yet unaffected by this it might be useful to write about some of the things that are happening.

Companions are setting out : (a) to state the aims of the Companionate clearly ; (b) to re-organise into smaller areas ; (c) to have keen and efficient secretaries and chaplains in all areas ; (d) to produce new and up-to-date lists of Companions.

(a) As I see it, the purpose of becoming a Companion is to encourage and support from outside those who have been called to membership of S.S.F. If this is so, then the Companionate does not exist for the benefit of its own members. This support is chiefly expressed in *praying daily* for the brothers and sisters and for their work. It might also in some cases be expressed in financial support, but the emphasis is on prayer. In order to do this properly each Companion will need to have up-to-date information about the Society and its three orders, and that is really only possible if he reads the reports made regularly in **THE FRANCISCAN**. A Companion must therefore be a *praying person*. This is not to say that he has to be in any way exceptional or expert, but simply that he regularly and deliberately 'turns to God'. He should, of course, be a firm and regular member of his local congregation. By his study of things Franciscan and his links with like-minded people (S.S.F. and his fellow-Companions) he seeks to make the Franciscan vocation, and particularly friars and sisters, better understood in the Church as a whole. Occasionally Companions will want to call on our help. But the *purpose* of the group is to work the other way round, that is—to play a quiet supportive rôle, and by making as few demands on them as possible, to free the friars and sisters to serve. In this ministry of *serving the servants* they will be taking a vital part in the total Franciscan witness. It happens to some organisations that over the years they become cumbersome, shapeless, and apathetic. That has, alas, been happening in some Companion areas where they have lost sight of these simple aims. And so we look for renewal.

I would like to ask each Companion to search his heart and consider if this daily obligation (implicit in being a Companion) is something he should continue to hang on to, or whether he should let it go. He may choose the latter, possibly in order to do other things better. There's no disgrace in making a responsible decision. Firm decisions (either to remain or not to) will be positive contributions to renewal. I hope that by the end of 1979—our renewal year—the membership lists will be up-to-date, and we shall be going forward into the 'eighties with a clearer sense of direction and purpose.

(b) In some areas Companions are out of touch with one another, and in others their proper self-reliance has given place to a complete dependence on the kind

offices of local Tertiaries. But we must now stand on our own feet again. Like youngsters suddenly imbued with a spirit of independence, we shall *seem* perhaps to be ungrateful to those who have helped us in our weakness. But it is not really so. And we know that those life-saving Tertiaries will understand that we shall want to have chaplains and secretaries, where possible, who are themselves Companions. The more or less gentle separation of the Third Order and Companion groups is not intended to be divisive (as it may superficially appear) but to lead to a good relationship, on equal terms, from positions of independence.

Ideally Companions will find themselves in a small group in a small area, nobody being more than a mile or two from some central point where meetings can be held. So the re-organisation will be based on the *Postal Code system*. Some of these areas will be too big for our purposes (like the NE (Newcastle) area) and must be split up, whilst others (perhaps only at first) will be too small and need to be grouped together. Thus it will be helpful if in all matters referring to Companions you include the postal code at the end of your address.

(c) A local secretary must be a Companion and a lay person. Chaplains will always be priests, but are not always Companions. These jobs are not easy, and I know that a number of you have struggled on in these jobs bravely, and have had little encouragement. I invite any officer to write to me about the problems of local organisation or about renewal. Indeed I welcome letters from any Companions. Don't be afraid to be critical.

(d) Still in many areas the list of local Companions is out-of-date, and continues to include names of people who have lapsed or who have departed from us (in one way or another !). Nor have the names of new Companions always been added. Where renewal is under way secretaries will be deleting the names of those from whom they receive no reply—but not until after at least a second attempt to make contact. Final lists, with the names removed and the reasons, should be sent to me.

It is tempting to suggest that no new Companions be admitted for a while until we are better organised and ready to receive them : but that would be too drastic. We can, however, restrict admission to those applicants who are keen and persistent, and who really know what they would be committing themselves to. Chaplains and professed friars and sisters have authority to decide about admissions.

I shall be glad to hear from any Companion, especially anyone feeling isolated from us or from his local group. Or, if the gentler tone of a sister appeals more, write to Sister Alison Mary C.S.F. (my assistant) at Compton Durville.

Sincerely,

RAPHAEL S.S.F.,

Provincial Warden.

Subscribers please note

If you receive a notice with this issue, and you know you have already paid since the last issue was received, please ignore the notice. If your subscription is in arrears, please send it as soon as possible.

I Saw Saint Francis

IT was at about six o'clock on the evening of 18 February, 1978, that I saw S. Francis. I happened, quite by chance, to be in Assisi that day and was told that, during the last few days, the bones of S. Francis had been brought to the surface, and that I was to be one of the very few people who were to be given the great privilege of seeing them.

So I presented myself at the Sacro Convento that evening and was met by the Custos, Father Bernardino, and Father Max Mizzi. They took me through locked doors into a room where, on a table, was a large bronze trunk which was the casket in which the bones of the saint had been placed after the previous exhumation in 1818. We then went through another locked door into a room in which was a table covered with a white cloth. On this table lay all that is left of S. Francis. One or two of the larger bones had split a little and the skull was broken ; but the rest were in excellent condition though not articulated. The three of us stood and gazed at them for a few minutes ; and I actually picked up one of the smaller bones (part of a finger) and held it in my hand for some time. I was also struck with the excellent condition and extreme whiteness of the teeth ; and when I got home I looked up the description of the bodily appearance of the saint, written a year or two after his death by Thomas of Celano, where we are told that his teeth were 'set close together, even and white'.

The next day I had lunch with the friars in their refectory and met there two medical men from Rome (one an anatomist) who had come there to arrange the bones in order in a perspex case which was afterwards placed in the bronze casket, and the whole reburied in the stone sarcophagus in the crypt of the Lower Church which has been their resting-place since they were first laid there in 1230.

This was, to me, a very moving event. I have spent a lot of time, during the last fifty-five years, in reading and thinking about S. Francis ; and have spent some hours in the crypt in Assisi looking at the stone coffin in which his body was said to lie. But I never thought for one moment that one day I should actually see and touch his bones.

Are they genuine ? This was a question which I naturally had to ask myself ; and I came to the conclusion that there cannot really be any doubt that these were the bones of S. Francis and not those of anyone else. Francis died on the 3rd of October, 1226, in a hut near the little church known as the Portiuncula, outside Assisi ; and on the next day, the body was carried up the hill and placed in the church of San Giorgio until a proper shrine could be built. The friars, under the direction of Elias, got to work without delay on the construction of the great basilica. This was to be a double church, the lower church for the use of the friars and the upper church for the laity. Elias greatly feared that the body of the saint might be stolen by the people of Perugia, who knew perfectly well that the relics of a very popular saint would bring large numbers of pilgrims to their city, and a lot of money. He therefore arranged for the body to be buried in a secret place, deep in the rock under the church. That there was some justification for his fears is shown by the fact that on no less than three occasions the Perugians managed to get into the church and start tearing up the pavement.

The story of the burial of the body of S. Francis is confused owing to the fact that the earliest accounts tell different stories. One says that when the procession from the church of San Giorgio to the Basilica reached the entrance, no one was allowed inside the church so that no one would know where the body was to be buried. Another account says that Elias had duped the people by moving the body secretly three days earlier, so that when the coffin was drawn through the streets it was, in fact, empty. It is impossible now to say exactly what happened ; but there is no doubt that the body of the saint was buried somewhere under the church. It is also known that no one had been buried there before as the tomb was hewn out of the solid rock, and that no one was buried anywhere near that particular spot, immediately under the High Altar of the Lower Church, in later years. There can, therefore, be no doubt that the bones which were exhumed in 1818 and again in 1978 were, in fact, the bones of S. Francis.

The previous exhumation in 1818 had taken place after much talk and consultation when it was decided, on the advice of a papal commission, to look for the tomb and discover, if possible, the state of the bones. This took some time ; but eventually they found, under three enormous blocks of stone, a simple stone sarcophagus of Roman times covered with two iron gratings and bound with ten iron bands. These were all removed, and the remains of S. Francis were found to be lying inside. A chapel was then dug out under the Lower Church so that pilgrims could pray before the stone coffin in which S. Francis lay. But nothing could be seen except the outside of the stone sarcophagus. And so it is today.

I am not, by nature, a great lover of relics ; and I have always been left cold on the rare occasions when I have looked at what is commonly passed off as the body of S. Clare in the church of S. Chiara. The object in Assisi which I love most is the little bit of parchment on which S. Francis, with his own stigmatised hand, wrote the blessing of Brother Leo on La Verna ; and I never thought that it was possible to get nearer to the saint than that. But I must confess that I was deeply moved when I actually saw and handled the very bones of the man who has meant so much to me and to so many others.

22 SPRINGWELL ROAD,
DURHAM.

JOHN R. H. MOORMAN,
Bishop.

New Australian House

As we go to press news has been received that a house in Islington, New South Wales, has been secured on a twelve months' lease. It will be called the Friary of S. Mary of the Angels, and three brothers move in in mid-December. It is close to the parish church of S. Mark. Here the brothers hope to live out in the midst of the inner city a life of Christian witness as Religious, earning part of their keep with part-time jobs. They ask for your prayers.

The Irony of Jesus

BY BROTHER BARNABAS

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth : but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil : but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away (Matthew 5 : 38—42).



THERE is a delicate humour in the sayings of Jesus, which is one of the secrets of his hold over people's imagination. The other cheek and the second mile have become household words. We refer to them humorously, knowing that we are not taking them literally. But they form the spirit of what we are doing. They express the effort involved in acting against our personal wishes with a good grace and a good will. They lift us up above grudging and pettiness.

But is it quite right to take Jesus' words so lightheartedly ? The answer, strangely enough, is yes. They are both serious and light-hearted at the same time. That is the irony of Jesus.

We don't like to think of Jesus as a humourist. His message of God's kingdom is too serious for that. But followers of Saint Francis know that humourists don't only aim at being funny, so as to make people laugh. Not that there is anything wrong in making people laugh. It has a releasing effect. They are more healthy if they can have a good laugh. But Francis was not that kind of humourist, though he regarded himself as God's jester. To him the funny side of life was its paradoxical nature. Laughter is mingled with tears. Francis had an intuitive understanding of the essence of Christian faith, and paradox is at the centre of it. To point to the irony of the birth of Jesus, Son of God Most High, in the poverty of a stable, is to say something positive about the meaning of the incarnation.

Saint Paul saw it too. 'The foolishness of God is wiser than men ; and the weakness of God is stronger than men ' (1 Corinthians 1:25). 'Jews', he says, 'require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom'

(ibid. 22). But they receive only the folly of the preaching of the cross. To the Jews it is a stumbling block,⁷ going clean contrary to what their expectations concerning God's plan of salvation would have led them to believe. To the Greeks it is foolishness, upsetting the calculations of the philosophers. J. A. Baker took this as the central idea for his constructive restatement of Christian faith, and dared to call his book *The Foolishness of God*. In the company of Paul and Francis we can see the joke, and recognise this book as one of the most serious pieces of theological writing of our time.

Paul has the same theme in mind on a later occasion, when he urges the Corinthians to be generous in their almsgiving. He throws out, almost as an aside, the following unforgettable verse : 'For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich' (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Paul never met Jesus and never heard him preach. But he seized the essential meaning of the message of Jesus to a far greater degree than most people realise. These touches of irony which appear in his writings carry the authentic note of the voice of the Master.

The message of Jesus is full of humour, but it is not just intended to make people laugh. It has its serious side, and indeed it is fundamentally a very serious matter, just like the humour of Paul and Francis, who followed his example.

So let us return to the famous sayings with which we began : the other cheek... the second mile... They come to us as moral precepts, things that we ought to put into practice. We may well be worried by the demand which they impose. But they are not intended to worry us, but to challenge our complacency. We often refer to them in a lighthearted way, as we have seen, when we do that little bit extra on someone else's behalf. But more has to be said about this. For we can easily feel guilty, because it seems that we are taking the words too lightly and too easily. Are we not meant to follow them out literally ? If we are not ready to love our enemies, to take no thought for the morrow, to give up all our possessions, are we not evading the issue ? The demands of the gospel, when taken literally, are just too difficult. And yet, if we say that they are not intended to be taken literally, are we not guilty of compromise ? The Christian life is all or nothing.

But then again, are we not running into danger of another kind if we take these sayings with such deadly seriousness ? We all know the caricature of the Puritan : grim, unbending—and humourless ! Or of the Enthusiast, whose Christian joy has become a form of pressurizing, from which people only desire to escape. But we must keep our sense of humour, and recognise the humour that there is in Jesus himself. ‘No thought for the morrow . . .’. But that’s impossible. You can’t just muddle along with no plans and no preparations. Exactly ! ‘Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things’. Hence you must do some planning. But it is all a matter of priorities, of the place where your heart is. ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness ; and all these things shall be added unto you’.

* * *

But enough of this. There is a humour in the moral teaching of Jesus. He makes his points by means of ironical exaggeration. We know that really, though we sometimes get into a muddle about it.

There is, however, another side to the humour of Jesus. He likes to speak in parables and proverbs. This is not only to make what he has to say memorable, and to drive his points home. It is sometimes a way of suggesting more than he can say directly. This appears in some of his exchanges with the Pharisees.

We tend to think of Jesus’ attitude to the Pharisees as one of implacable hostility. Certainly the gospels tend to give this impression. But one of the achievements of modern scholarship has been to rescue the Pharisees from the bad press which they have had all through the history of the church.

It has to be remembered that the gospels were written at a time when the rift between church and synagogue was becoming beyond repair. The Pharisees were the leaders of popular Jewish piety. They sought to bring people to awareness of the requirements of God, which they taught could only safely be met by exact observance of the law. But in the meantime the church had taken the epoch-making step of opening its doors to the Gentiles without insisting on observance of all the prescriptions of the law. This is what the controversy over circumcision, which is so prominent in Paul’s letters, was all about.

But before that fateful decision, the relationship with the Pharisees was closer, and this is even more true of the life of Jesus himself. In

fact it has long been known from study of the Mishna and other Jewish sources that there is much in common between Jesus and the Pharisees. He too wished to promote popular piety and to bring people to awareness of the requirements of God. But his method was different. Instead of multiplying observances, he sought to reduce them, so that people whose circumstances were discouraging should not feel cut off from the grace of God. This led to misunderstandings on the part of the Pharisees. Jesus dealt with such situations with a touch of humour.

The classic example is the question of fasting in Mark 2:18. Fasting was universally considered to be an aid to devotion. The Pharisees, followed apparently by the equally strict disciples of John the Baptist, attempted to promote two days of fasting a week. But the people in general could not, or would not, follow suit. Jesus makes no attempt to make them fast. The Pharisees express their disapproval. To them Jesus is hypocritical, claiming to be a religious teacher while sitting so light to good religious custom. Jesus' answer is one of his jokes : 'Can the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them ?'. Of course not !

But what does he mean by saying that the bridegroom is with them ? Is he referring to himself ? That is how it seemed to the evangelist, who added the next verse, with its obvious allusion to the subsequent life of the church : 'The days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days'. But this misses the point.

To gain a proper understanding of what Jesus is saying, we need to distinguish carefully between the main application of the parable and the allegorical interpretation of particular details. The suggestion that Jesus is himself the bridegroom belongs to such allegorical interpretation. Modern scholars (notably Jülicher and Dodd) have argued that this kind of interpretation is to be rejected altogether. The meaning of a parable lies not in specific details but in the appropriateness of the whole story to the point at issue. More recent scholarship has reacted against the absolute exclusion of allegorising of details. We shall see in a moment that in this case allegory is not to be excluded altogether, but it is used in a very subtle way. Herein lie the irony and humour of what Jesus is saying.

What Jesus is saying is that fasting in the present situation is no more appropriate than fasting during a wedding. Once the bridegroom has arrived, the feasting can begin. Fasting would be unsuitable,

because it is a time of rejoicing. But why is this situation, in which Jesus is preaching to the common people, a time of rejoicing? It is because the people are responding to the gospel. There is a renewal of religious faith and life as a result of his preaching. But if that is so, surely the renewal should be expressed in willing obedience to the requirements of the law? But this is where Jesus differs from the Pharisees. He will not spoil what he has gained by piling on burdens.

But was it necessary to use a parable in order to say this? Could he not have said it directly, without bringing in the simile of a wedding-feast? This is where the element of allegory comes in. Jesus is choosing his words with care. By using the symbolism of the bridegroom he can imply something more than he could otherwise have said. For the bridegroom already had symbolic currency in the biblical tradition. In the prophecies of Hosea and Ezekiel, God is the bridegroom and Israel is the bride. From this point of view the success of Jesus' preaching means that God is winning his bride. Thus Jesus is telling the Pharisees that they should not be grudging in their attitude towards his methods, because he is winning the people for God. And that is exactly what they would like to achieve themselves.

So we can see now why Jesus makes his answer in the form of a parable. It is a delicate way of appealing to the Pharisees to set aside their disapproval of him, and to accept the fact that, though his methods are different, his aims are the same.

But then perhaps Jesus is *also* the bridegroom at another level of interpretation. His rejoicing with the people, which prevents him from fasting, is his rejoicing with God, his rejoicing as the messenger of God. In that sense the Pharisees should beware of opposing him, for to do so is to fail to recognise that, unconventional as he is, he is the agent of God himself. But this is only suggested. Jesus does not speak of himself in this way outright.

* * *

Once we have seen that Jesus has a delicate way of referring to himself by means of irony, other sayings appear in a new light. Take the sayings in which Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man. These have been the subject of endless debate. But Vermes has cleared the ground by pointing out that this phrase (which properly simply means 'the man') is used in rabbinic sources as a self-reference, especially when it is desirable to avoid speaking in the first person for reasons

of delicacy. So when Jesus says, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head’ (Luke 9:58), ‘the Son of man’ here means ‘I’. But it also means a little more than that. It gains a certain emphasis from the context, and means at least ‘I, being the person that I am’ or even ‘in spite of being the person that I am’. Vermes cites examples where a rabbi refers to his own death in this way. So also Jesus uses the phrase in the passion predictions (*e.g.* Mark 8:31 : ‘The Son of man must suffer many things’). But there are also sayings in which Jesus refers darkly to his future glory (*e.g.* his reply to the high priest, Mark 14:62). If the phrase is a self-reference in these sayings, then it is a delicate way of indicating that he is a man of destiny, and yet avoiding egotism.

* * *

Another aspect of the humour of Jesus is the way he gets himself out of a trap. We are back with those tricky conversations with the Pharisees again. It is not surprising that stories of this kind have survived in the gospel traditions, because they are a favourite form of oriental humour.

The best known example is the question of the tribute money, with its unforgettable punch-line : ‘Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s’ (Mark 12:17). There is also the question about authority (Mark 11:27—33), in which Jesus refuses to give an answer unless his opponents will first come off the fence and say what they think about the authority of John the Baptist. Another example is the story of the woman taken in adultery, which has been preserved in some manuscripts of S. John’s Gospel (John 7:53—8:11). Here Jesus dissociates himself from the case by concentrating on something that he is writing in the dust. When at last he does speak, it is to make a sententious statement with an ironical ring : ‘He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her’. Then he goes on doodling.

We have not finished with the irony of Jesus. His message is extremely serious, but he is always laughing up his sleeve. He is telling people to be ready to face God when he comes in his kingdom, but he knows that they will never be able to do that unless they face him in their hearts now. They have got to be like the unjust steward (Luke 16:1—9 ; perhaps the original form of the parable ended at verse 7), who took immediate action when he got the sack. And they

must not be like the unmerciful servant (Matthew 18:22—35), who was let off an enormous debt, and then would not do the same for one who owed him infinitely less. The point is that Jesus loves human nature. The way people deceive themselves and try to evade reality is a source of constant amusement to him as well as pain. He does not let you get away with anything. He pricks the bubble of your complacency. He makes you face your real motives.

‘Let the dead bury their dead’ he says to one rather hesitant disciple (Luke 9:60). It sounds rather grim. But of course it is just one of his jokes.

Straws Without Brick

An Enquiry into Franciscan Humour

BY BROTHER LAWRENCE CHRISTOPHER



AS epigraph to his life of Ronald Knox, Evelyn Waugh quoted a letter from that divine : ‘I doubt if we do laugh at anything in this sublunary world except when we think we see imperfection in it. Are we then to think of heaven as quite humourless ?’. Perhaps incongruity rather than imperfection is a truer basis for humour, but it must be admitted that the editorial piety of friends and the reverence of hagiographers are only too likely to blur the edges of humour in their subjects. It is said that Francis was never heard to laugh aloud, and one can believe that the belly-laugh or the idle guffaw would have been distasteful to him (cf. *Mirror of Perfection* 96), but laughter evidences itself in the eyes and in the quirk of the lips, and I would guess that Francis’ amusement at his own and his followers’ antics was and is his only relief from the suffering reflected in the omniscience of his maker. The ragged beggar proclaiming ‘I am the Herald of the Great King’ was surely never so dotty that he could not see the humour to the world of the truth he announced. Indeed I will suggest that somewhat obliquely he and his followers played the whole gamut of humour from whimsy and teasing to irony and savagery.

Truth to tell there is very little overt humour in the ‘official’ or earlier biographies of the Saint, though who can doubt the twinkle in

his eye as he looked up at his jeering brother : ‘ Ask if he’ll sell you a pennorth of his sweat ’. ‘ The servant of God ’, says the Three Companions (23), ‘ heard the words and replied gaily in French, “ I will sell my sweat at a better price to God ” ’. Or in the same passage, that he enjoyed the ridicule with which he answered his father’s revilings by adopting a beggar as his earthly father, to bless him whenever Bernardone cursed.

I suspect that the elements of franciscan humour are more likely to be found undistorted in later writings where oral tradition may have escaped the limitations of piety—in the History of the XXIV Generals, the Liber Exemplorum, Wadding, and the like—which I have to accept at second hand since I have neither opportunity nor scholarship to check them. The makings of at least a bricklet is found on our own shores ! The Chronicle of Lanercost tells us that when the first friars arrived at Dover they were greeted hostilely as spies and rogues. ‘ If we are indeed spies and rogues, called one of them untying his Cord, here is a rope to hang us ’. The retort won the hearts of their hosts, and the friars were accepted. At Oxford Bishop Grossteste remarked wonderingly that the friars were always so merry and bright. So bubbling was their good humour that when first they said the Office together at Canterbury, their giggles overcame them (forerunner of how many such debacles ?) and they had to start again. Alas, soon we are to read of the Oxford novice who could not control his laughter in spite of frequent recourse to the discipline, and within a century we are faced with the ‘ jovial (Friar Tuck type) Friar ’ who did but little credit to the franciscan image.

That English friar’s gift of repartee might have been learned from Blessed Giles who appears rarely to have opened his mouth excepting for generally rather acid comment. One of the least dour of his jests was the remark that ‘ only the swallows and brother Bernard are able to live in the air and find their nourishment so far from the earth ’ (Analecta 4:182. Little Flowers 28 modifies and pietises this into ‘ In his divine flight he was fed like the swallows ’). Charming, too, is the occasion when, after a discussion of holiness with S. Bonaventure, he ran out into the garden to call across the hedge to a poor old woman passing by, ‘ Rejoice, old dear, for I have just learned that you are capable of loving God even more than brother Bonaventure ’. Then, continues the chronicler in Analecta Franciscana, he went into ecstasy and there remained three hours without coming to himself again. Most

famous, perhaps, of his comments is when he saw the magnificent Basilica that Elias had erected : ‘ All that you need now is women ’ ; when the brother to whom he spoke looked scandalised, he continued ‘ Since you have abandoned holy poverty, you might as well abandon chastity also ’. Most macabre was his remark to a tiresome widow mourning the death of her son—‘ What would you rather have, his body or his soul ? ’. ‘ His body ’, she sobbed, ‘ for I had threatened him with my curse if he became a friar minor ’. ‘ Then go to the cemetery ; find his body which you loved so much, and see what has become of it ’. To Giles, surely, should be attributed the remark which Englebert¹ puts into the mouth of S. Francis when the Poverello was beginning to be worried by the frequency of visits to the Clares (cf. II Cel. 204—206) : ‘ It is the Lord who preserved us from taking wives, but who knows if it is not the devil who sent us sisters ’.

In his early years, Giles was a great pilgrim. Not so brother Masseo : ‘ he even preferred the company of his brothers to going on pilgrimage ’. ‘ I find ’, he said, ‘ there is more to be gained from the company of live saints than dead ones ; the latter are dumb, the former can speak, and in telling us of temptations they have overcome can warn us against the dangers which menace us ’ (XXIV Generals).

Poor Masseo, whom S. Francis praised for his ‘ gracious look and natural good sense ’ (Mirror), how baffled must he have been in both attributes when his holy father with holy (or was it unholy ?) glee made him twirl and twirl and twirl again till God and giddiness pointed out the road that they should take (Little Flowers XI).

And Leo ? ‘ Father, I beg you in God’s name to tell me where perfect joy is ’. What is the parable of ‘ Perfect Joy ’ other than the very first ‘ shaggy dog ’ story ? (at any rate as told in the Little Flowers ; Father Bugatti’s version is more straightforward—Omnibus of Sources, p. 1501).

I spoke of savagery and we came near to it with Blessed Giles, but S. Francis could overtop him. His reverence for creatures would not allow him more than gentle and compassionate irony or whimsy in alluding to the imperfections of those who were trying to be saints, but he could be utterly intolerant of ‘ flies ’ whether cash (Scripta Leonis 59) or the idle brother (Scripta Leonis 20, 62)—both to him manifestations of the devil (one does not know if he directly associated

¹ Throughout this essay I have drawn heavily on Omar Englebert’s splendidly revised (1972) *Vie de St. Francois*.

flies with Beelzebub)—and sheerly crude in his dealings with Satan himself. For himself when tempted, discipline and the family of snow (II Cel. 116, 117), for Ruffino sympathy and counsel to take the offensive : ‘ O little rascal Ruffino, who’ve you been listening to ? . . . If he tries again say to him : Open your mouth *che ora vi ti voglio cacare* ’. (Congratulations are due to the translator who substituted a p for an h in the four-letter word !). When Ruffino took his advice, the devil forthwith departed with such a ‘ tempest and commotion ’ that Mt. Subasio was riven with great clefts (Little Flowers 29).

Repartee was not normally Francis’ line, but on one occasion, if the unknown reporter of an anecdote of S. Bonaventure is to be believed, he certainly scored. During the crazy, two-man crusade of reconciliation to the Holy Land, when Francis and Illuminato penetrated to the court of the Sultan, the latter sought to lay a trap for the Saint. The approach to Melek-el-Kamil’s throne was across a carpet decorated with crosses. ‘ I see you do not object to desecrating the symbol of your faith ’, he said. ‘ You are mistaken ’, replied the Saint ; ‘ there were three crosses, that of our Saviour and two robbers. We venerate the one ; you are welcome to the rest ’. (Omnibus p. 1614).

Lambert (Franciscan Poverty) has a story which, though it emanates from those arch axe-grinders, Salimbene via G. G. Coulton,² is fairly well-authenticated and betrays a very human side of the Poverello. On one occasion a certain brother Stephen had been told that he had prepared too much food for their meal, and Francis ordered him not to prepare anything for the following day. Next noon, coming cheerfully to sit with his companions he found nothing on the table but a few crusts of bread and remnants, and asked brother Stephen why . . . When the cook reminded him, he only said ‘ Discretion is good ; one should not always do what one’s superiors say ’.

Human, too, is his gentle reproach to brother Leo who was developing a tendency to go into ecstasy while celebrating Mass : ‘ Little sheep of God, I beg you to conform. If God sends you some grace, wait till you’ve said Mass and gone to your cell before you taste your divine consolations. If not, vainglory may enter in, the devil may take away its merits—not to mention that the assistants will get irritated waiting for you ’ (Liber exemplorum 70).

² With undergraduate intolerance I used to regard Coulton as ‘ the enemy ’, but Bill Lash assures me that in private he was a charmer with a very franciscan life-style.

At this point I cannot forbear mentioning Englebert's delightful but almost untranslateable phrase about brother Leo, many years later, when Giles (having come out of his Perugian seclusion) told him about the marble coffer for alms which the Minister had installed in the Basilica : ' Frère Brebis de Dieu se mua en mouton furieux ' ; he took a hammer and smashed the coffer, for which he was whipped and imprisoned (XXIV Generals).

It would be absurd to try and illustrate the humour of our franciscan forerunners without any mention of brother Juniper—and yet I introduce him with some embarrassment. It was precisely because he couldn't realise that he was funny that he is so endearing ; the episodes of the pig's trotter and the preparation, without the amenity of a deep-freeze, of a fortnight's food owe their element of comedy to his innocence, the simplicity which made S. Francis murmur ' Oh, that I had a thicket of such junipers '. Had he known what he was up to, or had his brethren not been irritated by his exploits, these would have been blatant buffoonery and totally unfunny.

Not so with the Poverello. His simplicity was unalloyed, but his mimetic, unashamedly whimsical humour was surely calculated ; as when, to cheer himself and his friends he would take two twigs and pretend to play the violin while he sang in French ; what was not calculated—but perhaps the angels smiled through his tears—was that almost immediately the twigs would remind him of the Cross (Little Flowers 93). At the Easter feast,³ it was deliberately to reprove his brethren for luxuriousness that he very transparently disguised himself as a beggar, asked his alms, and then ate them sitting on the floor ' like a friar minor '. Let us accept that he was often at a loss for words when preaching, but the sermon to the Clares was good strong meat. Overcome by ' the insistence of his Vicar that he should preach to them...' he then commanded ashes to be brought to him and he made a circle with them around himself on the pavement and sprinkled the rest on his head. But when they waited for him to begin and the blessed father remained in the circle in silence, no small astonishment arose in their hearts. The saint then suddenly rose and to the amaze-

³ 2 Cel. 61. Bonaventure connects this incident with the Emmaus Road (Bon. VII 9). Legenda Antiqua and Scripta Leonis set it at Christmas. So far as I can discover, the two former are the only references anywhere in the memories of S. Francis to mention a paschal celebration. On the other hand he thought that even the walls should be smeared on the outside with meat on Christmas Day ! (2 Cel. 200).

ment of the nuns recited the ‘ miserere ’ in place of a sermon. When he had finished he quickly left (II Celano 207). It may be objected that this story is not funny, but I am sure the little Poor Man laughed heartily to himself ; he had avoided talking to them, had stayed so short a time as possible, and had given them a lesson to think out for themselves, rather than a pious exhortation. And indeed, in the passage preceding this one (206), Celano himself displays a certain prim humour about the brother who wanted to visit ‘ his own two daughters of perfect life in a certain monastery ’ whom ‘ Francis rebuked very severely, saying things that shall not here be repeated ’.

The whole symbolism of ashes has comic connotations. Somewhere I have read that in the lunatic fringe of the many books about S. Francis there is one that ‘ proves ’ him to have been jewish, and certainly his mannerism of rubbing his head, with or without ashes, while repeating a phrase several times, has a somewhat stage-yiddischer ring. An instance that comes to mind is the friar who pestered him for a psalter (Mirror 4 ; less dramatically rendered in Legend of Perugia 73). ‘ Once you have a psalter, you will want a breviary. And when you have a breviary, you will sit in a high chair like a great prelate, and say to your brother, Bring me my Breviary ! As he spoke, blessed Francis in great fervour of spirit took up a handful of ashes and placed them on his head, and rubbing his hand around his head, as though he was washing it, he exclaimed : I a breviary ! I a breviary ! and he repeated this many times passing his hand over his head. And the friar was amazed and ashamed ’.

Again, this kind of gleeful repetition, though without the ashes, occurs in Little Flowers 10 when brother Masseo ‘ Tested S. Francis humility ’. ‘ He said to S. Francis, half-jokingly, Why after you ? Why after you ? Why after you ?—You want to know why after me ? You want to know why after me ? You really want to know why everyone is running after me ?... He did not find on earth a viler creature, and therefore he chose me, for God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise ’.

This is the point I have somewhat laboriously been trying to reach in the last few paragraphs. Incongruity, I suggested earlier on, is the basic element of humour, but the incongruity has to be consciously recognised. Francis was very willing consciously to be a clown (in possibly his own words : *unus novellus pazzus*. Scripta Leonis 110)

for Christ's sake, if thereby he could set the example and teach the lessons of the Jesus whom he loved.

I began this essay with a slightly irrelevant quotation. Suffer me to finish it with another, from that very franciscan (if more cerebral than Francis would have cared for) teacher whom later franciscans hounded to condemnation, the Meister Eckhart (Blakney Fragment 36) : 'When God laughs at the soul and the soul laughs back at God, the persons of the Trinity are begotten. To speak in hyperbole, when the Father laughs to the Son, and the Son laughs back to the Father, that laughter gives pleasure, that pleasure gives joy, that joy gives love and love gives the Persons of which the Holy Spirit is one'.

Zen Humour

BY MARY STEWART



WRITING an article about Zen humour is serious business. Not deadly serious, mind you, for that is the point of the joke—to destroy deadly seriousness—but serious in the sense that an audience must be properly prepared to see the joke. It is useless, for instance, to tell a Polish story to an Irishman, and *vice-versa*. He may laugh, but only because he thinks you expect him to. If you don't get the point of the joke, you show yourself to be stupid. However, politeness in the face of a joke is an insult to the storyteller whose intent is quite different. He wants you to be amused, to laugh right out loud, to see the absurdity of the situation. In his eyes it is stupid not to laugh at a joke.

Genuine laughter travels far beyond the intellect and socially correct behaviour, into a state where neither storyteller nor listener exists. Even the joke itself is forgotten in that instance of unmitigated mirth. Your 'self', its cares, its worried, inflated sense of importance, vanish into the clear, thin air. You are free from everything. You are truly liberated.

Zen¹ knows this. It sets against the earnest dedication and commitment of the would-be master/sage the carefree gaiety of the child/clown/fool. Its masters are living proof of the harmony of these two extremes. They deliberately use the technique of humour to crash the barriers in their disciples' minds between illusion and reality, intelligence and intuition. Enlightenment—the ultimate aim of all Buddhists—is, essentially, the Big Joke, for with the practice at removing barriers, illusion is seen to be reality, the intellect no different from intuition. Enlightenment is a laughing, not a crying matter.

However, the ' way ', the path to enlightenment as well as enlightenment itself, is more often spoken of as the Great Death. How is this ? In essence it is nothing different from having the Irishman appreciate the Polish joke, to cease being Irish, as it were, to die to his Irishness. More directly to the point is the story of two Zen masters. ' Joshu said to Tosu, " The man who has suffered the Great Death, what kind of living activity is his ? ". Tosu answered, " You can't go back in the dark ; you have to wait till it's light " '.

Or take two poems by Ikkyu :

Why are people called Buddhas
After they die ?
Because they don't grumble any more,
Because they don't make nuisances of themselves any more.
We are born, we die
All are the same
Shakamuni (Buddha), Druma (Bodhidharma)
The cat and the ladle.

It is the perennial task of Zen training to break down the conditioning to the separate self, to show that basically the Irishman and the Pole, ' are all the same '. Disabusing one of his illusions regarding separateness, especially when these are exaggerated to establish a superior (or inferior) status, is not an easy business. Cultural conditioning on its own leads at times to a pathological attachment to, let us say, Irishness, Polishness, masculinity, middle-classness, whatever seemingly distinctive qualities that give you the edge over the next fellow.

Viewed with detachment, man hanging on to his differentness looks pretty silly. Yet it is a universal phenomenon, and the one which gives humour its cutting edge. The serious undercurrent concerns suffering and death, both also universal truths of existence. According to Zen,

¹ The Japanese word for ' meditation ', and a sect of Buddhism.

the only way to bring about realistic acceptance of these facts as facts, and man's ordinariness in being inescapably subject to them, is to kill the causes of spiritual death. And what, you may well ask, are they ? Zen tells us they are resistances to sameness, that is, the barriers of separateness. All men know about these things such as suffering and death but each likes to think he is exempt—or if not exempt, extraordinarily cursed. The lethal blow is effected, and again, universally, by the sweetness of the smile or damning with faint praise. In oriental countries within spiritual disciplines humour as a lethal weapon has been cultivated to a fine art. Shan-neng said, ' We must not cling to the wind and the noon of the day and ignore the eternal Void ; neither should we cling to the eternal Void and ignore the wind and the noon of the day '. Ikkyu again :

Whose is it then,
My children,
The red, red moon ?
Buddhism
Is the shaved part of the saucepan
The whiskers of the pebble
The sound that accompanies
The bamboos in the picture.

Worldly passion is the dog of the house : it does not go away when you beat it. Enlightenment is the deer of the mountain : it does not come when you call it.

Preaching :
Yawns
Mixed with belief. Kanno
A Zazen (meditation) hall :
Nobody there !
They must be tired of it.
At last
With his dead face
He looks like a man. Kenkako

If this seems a bit difficult for us in the west to see as humourous, let us consider the two major influences in the western cultural tradition in order to unburden ourselves of our peculiarly western prejudice of mind. The two influences are Hebrew and Greek. The former advocates the religious and moral separation of God from man ; the latter proposes the ideal separation of the intellect and the senses wherein rationality becomes the centre of personal identity. The result is a slightly schizoid human being who has inherited the dualism of

irrationality and nagging conscience from the Hebrews, and the excessively dividing mind from the Greeks. Some contemporary protestant thinkers, Tillich and Heidegger, feel that changes in basic thinking are needed, that locating trust in the intellect and setting the intellect off against objects it must overwhelm—have power over rather than wisdom of—is a fundamentally basic error.

This concurs with the oriental approach to life. Natural law, especially the natural law of chance, is only observable in the instant when duality is suspended. It is a chance hit, occurring only once, which forms the configuration of interest. There is no need for sifting, weighing, reflecting, classifying, isolating—in short, for any of the paraphernalia of the intellectual process. Things seem to occur coincidentally rather than casually, in space as opposed to time, creating a minute interdependence of events. Thus the oriental, and more specifically the student of Zen, is directed to look within, not to find the self, but to dispel the illusion that there is an inside as distinct from an outside. Rinzai, one of the very great Zen masters, said : ‘ Make no mistake—there is nothing on the outside, and likewise nothing on the inside that you can grasp ’.

The oriental favours intuition over reason. Intuition is felt to be at the centre of the personality holding together the warring forces of reason/unreason, intellect/senses, morality/nature. Zen considers facts living and concrete, and teaches what might be called ‘ radical intuitionism ’, which is to say that thinking and feeling live within the vital medium of intuition. Nothing more. Zen training, in the end, is pointing to the awakening of the ‘ third eye ’.

By doing away with the separation between ego and the world outside which the ego must grasp and understand, Zen goes back to the basic teaching of the Buddha. The Buddha taught that the way to undo conceptual poisoning was for each individual seeker after Truth to find it for himself. ‘ Seek thine own salvation ’. Zen goes beyond this to the matter-of-fact attitude of fully participating in whatever one is doing. The thoroughly integrated person is without a divided mind. Zen training demands individuation of the disciple, rather than filial obedience and fragmentation—orientation to a venerated object outside oneself.

The story is told of the Chinese emperor Wu, that he asked the first Zen patriarch, Bodhidharma (Daruma, in Japanese), ‘ what is the main principle of the holy teaching ? ’. Bodhidharma replied : ‘ It is an

emptiness with nothing holy about it'. While the emperor was probably not amused many others were and Zen—or Ch'an, as it is known in Chinese, took hold.

What there is to understand cannot be grasped by the intellect. Even this fact, when it is realised as true, has to be seen as very funny, considering the time and effort and energy put into trying to discover so many things via the intellect. The Ch'an master, Paichang said to three of his disciples : ' Shut your gullet, close your lips and say something ! '. The story is told of another Ch'an master, Yangchin, that he got on his pulpit and said : ' Ha, ha, ha ! What's this ? Go back to the end of the hall and have your tea ! ' and got down from the pulpit.

Is it possible to picture these scenes ? Three eager, expectant monks awaiting profound words of wisdom from the master ; a room full of monks similarly anticipating something extraordinary and special. They all got in the end just what they wanted, but not in the way they wanted it. And, assuredly, they were not amused, at least not initially. Imagine coming to one's master and being told to shut up and say something ! How absurd ! What an insult to the intelligence ! Yet, is this not precisely what the masters had in mind ? Paichang is pointing to seeing : ' Don't live in your heads ', he tells his monks, ' see life around you and in yourselves as one and the same thing. When you do, you will have no choice but to laugh '. Yangchin mocks the attentiveness of his audience. It is up to them, not him, to find truth, which is in the very ordinary activities they have put aside to come to listen to him. ' Leave this place and have your tea. Become the tea, the drinking, the cup—everything ! '.

The Zen sense of humour as a way of looking is not unknown in the west, merely unrecognised as a liberating process and training. Blake's ' the fool who persists in his folly will become wise ' ; Spinoza's ' the more we know of particular things, the more we know of God ' ; or the biblical ' vanity of vanities ; all is vanity ; I said in mine heart, " go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure and behold ; this also is vanity " ' ; all are in essence Zen. Awakening the third eye, the latent power of intuition, is to see into the nature of one's own being.

From this point we can return to the dichotomous westerner who has been conditioned to believe that to be healthy and to be saved he must mistrust his inmost nature. This ensures the survival of social

institutions, to be sure ; but it does so at the expense of the integrated person. And also, the fact that the unconscious intuition is at root creative and intelligent, and therefore ultimately trustworthy, is ignored.

Zen's method is to get the student to realise through meditation and the *koan*² that the mind cannot think about itself. Zen humour thus attempts to liberate the individual from the tactical split of the spirit and the body. The spirit returned to the body represents the recovery of one's natural endowment, which in reality was always there ; only social conditioning had obscured it.

Buddhism passed from India to China to Korea and then to Japan. The Ch'an sect understood the most difficult yet most practical truth of all Buddhist teaching, namely that illusion is enlightenment and *vice versa*. The Chinese Ch'an monks made the Indian spiritual and idealistic teaching more practical and earthy. As the teaching passed to Japan, it went deeper into the lower ranks of society wherein the humouristic aspect was more fully realised. Humour has about it the selflessness and desirelessness of true poverty. The way of humour, which is Zen, requires tremendous courage. One has to live in time and not in eternity ; in folly, not with wisdom, and see God as a comic flea cracker.

The Zen monks remind us of the early Franciscans who claimed an affinity with the wandering troubadours and jongleurs, and the holy fools of the Greek and Russian Orthodox church. Selfishness and pride were conquered through an identification with the fool and through comic exaggeration, folly was dramatized and exposed.

Bankei was once interrupted during a sermon by a zealous priest of another Buddhist sect. ‘The founder of our sect has such miraculous powers that he held a brush in his hand on one bank of a river, and his attendant held up a piece of paper on the other, and the teacher wrote the holy name of Amida through the air. Can you do such a wondrous thing ?’. Bankei replied, ‘Perhaps your fox can perform that trick : but that is not the manner of Zen. My miracle is that when I feel hungry I eat and when I feel thirsty I drink’.

Yun-nen told his monks the legend of the Buddha's pointing towards heaven with one hand and earth with the other at the time of his birth, and then taking ten steps forward, looking in the four quarters of the

² A *koan* is a rationally insoluble riddle—‘what is the sound of one hand clapping ?’—designed to break the hold of the intellect on an individual.

earth and exclaiming : 'Above and beneath heaven, I alone am the most honoured one'. Yun-nen said, 'If I had seen him at the time, I would have cut him down with my staff and given his flesh to the dogs to eat so that peace could prevail over all the world'.

How wondrous this, how mysterious !
I carry fuel, I draw water. Ho-koji

Zen humour moves into territory alien to the conditional mind, especially that of the westerner. While this way may seem to remove form from life, it actually gives life its form and substance. What Zen is saying is that one cannot conceive reality : it can only happen, and when one lets it happen by relaxing mental muscles, one is immediately filled with joy. This joy is maintained by constant practice of letting life happen naturally. Hojoki said, 'Consider the lives of the birds and fishes. Fish never weary of the water : but you do not know the true mind of the fish. Birds never tire of the woods : but you do not know their true spirit, for you are not a bird. It is just the same with the religious, the poetical life : if you do not live it, you know nothing about it'.

If you walk, just walk ;
If you sit, just sit,
But don't wobble, whatever you do. Yun-nen

It is worthwhile to note, however, one peculiarity of the Japanese language which allows for expression of impersonal action : One may say, 'There is loving' instead of 'I love you', so that one can express love of God, for example, the same way one expresses one's love for everyone and everything else. It is the activity rather than its object/subject which is important. In this way of thinking God is all things and all things are God.

Not only does this emphasis on action rather than subject/object preclude the separate ego, it takes from the presumed special class of knowers of the truth the privilege of superiority. That a man chooses to be a priest and not a stone-mason is his personal decision. Insofar as he learns his trade, as it were, he will evidence it in his work and not in his words. Actions speak. Yun-nen said : 'There are those who, upon seeing an old monk opening his mouth to speak, put his special words into their own mouths to chew them. They are like flies struggling to gobble up rubbish'. On another occasion, he said : 'If I speak words to teach so that you can, on hearing them, understand, I shall in fact be throwing rubbish on your heads'.

We see now that the preparation for getting the point of the joke and the joke itself epitomise spiritual freedom. The Great Death is the dying to seriousness, boorishness, the hypersensitive 'I' thinking itself separate and in pursuit of some lofty goal, which one feels must be priestly and/or spiritual. The true man of spirit is the perpetual clown-fool, childlike, simple and lowly as well as iconoclastic and redemptively profane. His good humour is compassionate wisdom, the result of his having let go of all attachment, desire and illusion ; a happy and healthy balance of knowledge and ignorance, good and evil —in short, the mature immaturity which transcends all rational bonds and bounds. He has defeated the mentality of seriousness, pushed his own mind beyond the level of explanation, and maintains his freedom by staying in good humour. He laughs not at life but at his pretensions about it, thus saving himself from being caught up in distinctions and, more importantly, from having to make them, which he realises is totally absurd. For the man of Zen, possessed of this sense of joy, life holds no terrors.

Kuei-shen said : 'When the approach to enlightenment is like the swift thrust of a sword to the centre of all things, then both worldliness and saintliness are completely eliminated, and true reality revealed'.

There are things that even the wise fail to do,
While the fool hits the point.

Unexpectedly discovering the way to life in the midst of death,
He burst out in hearty laughter. Sengai

And so, according to Zen, the Irishman and the Pole have been laid to rest, side by side, in one roar of laughter.

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Zen Story

A Zen master was approached by a disciple who was scandalized by the behaviour of a fellow-disciple. The master listened to his story attentively and said, 'I quite agree'. The disciple retired satisfied. Thereupon the one complained of arrived to give his version of the story. The master listened attentively and said, 'I quite agree'. So the second disciple retired satisfied. A third disciple who had been witness to all that had been said burst out, 'How can you sit there and agree with them both ? It's ridiculous !'. The master replied, 'I quite agree'.



Religious Jokes

BY A SISTER C.S.Cl.

RELIGION is our life with God and a joke, as the little boy said in Van Zeller's book, *Leave your life alone* (p. 102 f.) is 'something which makes you go *ha, ha*'. A religious joke, then, must be something about the things of God that makes us go *ha, ha*—unless, of course, it turns out to be something that makes God go *ha, ha* when he contemplates his creature man.

A joke about religion need not be particularly religious : 'Humeral veils are being dropped'. On the other hand a so-called secular joke may express for someone a certain truth, and then I should say it is religious. 'What's the difference between an elephant and a pillar box ?' a child asked me. I pondered on similar jokes with a catch in them or a pun, such as the jeweller and the jailor (one sells watches and the other watches cells) and finally had to admit I didn't know. 'No use sending you out to post a letter, then' was the reply. Yes ; our complicated minds generally expect life to be full of catches and so we overlook the obvious straightforward answer.

Talking of catches reminds me of fish. Someone gave a mock blessing with the words, 'The piece of cod which passeth all understanding'. Some people were shocked, though most laughed. We knew no irreverence was intended. It was just harmless frivolity. In the same way it is our best friends we tease, not strangers. We can afford to take liberties with people we are at ease with. Was this joke about religion a religious joke ? The truth it expresses for me is that *everything* in God's universe passes all understanding, and we are apt to forget this. It would be a pity if we lost our sense of wonder at creation or forgot our kinship with it. On this subject of kinship with creation : an ape at the zoo had been reading the Bible and then someone put Darwin's *Origin of species* through the bars. The next day the ape was heard to mutter, 'Am I my keeper's brother ?'.

Here is a really irreverent joke :

- Q : What were the last words of Jesus from the cross to his mother ?
A : 'Hey, Mum. You can see our house from here'.

This sort of thing makes me wince. All the more reason for looking carefully to see if I can find a redeeming truth in it. Well, he couldn't

really see their house—Nazareth was too far away. But, yes : he can see his Father's house. ‘I go to prepare a place for you’. ‘This day shalt thou be with me in paradise’. For me the joke never reaches the *ha, ha* level, but is capable of transcending it and turning into a meditation on the Passion.

Silence is golden ; Trappist silence is funny. Perhaps we feel nervous at the thought of people living the silent life (if it's how we imagine it). It doesn't seem natural, does it ? There may even be a touch of envy or resentment that these men are capable of living in a way that would be too hard for us. Anyway, they are odd and a minority, so let's joke about them and laugh it off. I am rather fond of the classic one about the porridge. Everybody knows it but I'll risk repeating it.

Each Christmas as a treat one brother was allowed to say one sentence for the edification of the Community. One year Brother A said, ‘The porridge is too lumpy’ and then a year passed in silence. Next Christmas Brother B’s turn came : ‘The porridge is too runny’. So another year passed and now Brother C stood up and said : ‘I’m quitting’. This was such an unusual statement that the Abbot felt he had to intervene. He asked Brother C why he wanted to leave. ‘It’s all this constant petty bickering about the porridge’.

Over the years this joke has given me food for thought, so I think there must be some goodness in it.

We are on safe ground joking about Jews because they are always joking about themselves. (And why, do you suppose ?). In fact, they seem better at it than Christians as a rule.

The Rabbi sent his son to give alms to a blind beggar. ‘Did you raise your hat to him, my son ?’. ‘No, father’, replied the boy. ‘What’s the point when he can’t see ?’. ‘Always raise your hat to a blind beggar, my son. You never know, he may be an imposter’.

That was a real Jewish joke but I am unsure of the provenance of the one about the three Jewish fathers. They all sent their sons to the Holy Land and they became Christians. They wanted to know what to do. The third man was the Rabbi, so they suggested he should consult the Lord Jehovah as he hadn’t any other solution to offer. The Lord Jehovah answered and said, ‘I too had a son . . .’.

It makes you think, doesn’t it ?

Laughter releases tension. It is the aspects of life that are important to us that we become tense about and so they are the very things people joke about. Here is one about sex and religion :

Curate : 'Isn't it shocking, my Lord, that these young people have pre-marital intercourse ? I never slept with my wife before we were married, did you my Lord ?'.

Bishop : 'I don't know. What was her maiden name ?'.

It looks as if we are making fun of the bishop, but in fact the joke is only funny because we are sure the bishop would not have behaved like that. If our bishops were immoral it would be no joke. But can we find a truth embedded (sorry !) in the story ? This is what I think : it was about time someone squashed that pompous young curate. A priest should not be so easily shocked. The bishop, an older and wiser man, is more tolerant of human weakness. I know which of the two people are more likely to turn to in difficulties.

In cartoons the visual impact is all-important and defies description, and as there is no space to discuss *Peanuts*, *Cracks in the cloister*, *Barnabas* or *Savile's selection* I shall just have to cut these out.

Retreats are a good source of jokes. I don't go into retreat simply to hear new jokes but I should be disappointed if the retreat conductor had nothing to offer in this line. Fortunately they usually manage something, mainly the kind of joke that sheds a humorous light on our failings, or that urges us on to renewed efforts in prayer and Christian living. 'For sale in a shop window : crucifix, on easy terms'.

I think this one came from a retreat or a sermon :

The packed auditorium (Melbourne, Sydney or somewhere like that) was suddenly plunged in darkness and a voice said, 'Is there an electrician in the house ?'. A Chinese gentleman came forward : 'I not electrician but I t'ink I help. Everlybody please laise your hands'. Thousands of hands were raised and the lights came on. The theatre manager was delighted : 'How did you do it ?'. The Chinese gentleman bowed and said, 'Many hands—make light work'.

We remember a story that is amusing even if it makes us laugh at ourselves : A man was trying to get a speck of dust out of someone's eye. Why couldn't he do it ? He had a great plank in his own and so he couldn't see. We have heard this too many times for it to strike us as very funny, perhaps, but it must have sounded very amusing when Jesus first told the story. Such a ludicrous picture, and yet how true

of most of us it is. In acknowledging this we come closer than usual to seeing things as they really are, seeing them from God's point of view. When a portly gentleman slips on a banana skin the child in the gutter laughs to see dignity brought down to his own position. But if the fallen man sees how ridiculous he is and laughs at himself then it raises the joke to a higher level and there is joy in heaven because someone has seen that it's no good depending on himself but his whole dependence must be on God alone.

So a religious joke is God's joke, but one that he allows us to share. At the Founding of Narnia in C. S. Lewis's book, *The Magician's Nephew*, the Jackdaw said something out of turn and all the animals laughed. Then Aslan said :

' Laugh and fear not, creatures. Now that you are no longer dumb and witless, you need not always be grave. For jokes as well as justice come in with speech '.

So they all let themselves go.

Then the Jackdaw asks :

' Aslan ! Aslan ! Have I made the first joke ? Will everybody always be told how I made the first joke ? '.

' No, little friend ', said the Lion. ' You have not *made* the first joke ; you have only *been* the first joke '. Then everybody laughed more than ever ; but the Jackdaw didn't mind and laughed just as loud. (*The Magician's Nephew*, p. 117).

Accident

BY BROTHER RICHARD

IT was a perfect July afternoon as I mounted my cycle to visit the flock at a neighbouring village—and to be rejected with politeness or embarrassment.

My flask of tea, and a jam sandwich, were in my satchel on my shoulder. Not a cloud in the sky ; the birds sang, the lambs frisked beside their mothers (or am I thinking of another occasion ?) ; the green had lost its first freshness, but the air was clear.

My machine was at top performance. Soaring down a mere slope, aided by no breeze, it needed no pedalling to carry me to the top of the first rise. ' Dare I repeat that ? ' I thought to myself, ' I see no traffic coming down the next slope '.

This time, with full pedal-power, I let her go. The next short slope was steep and my machine gathered a considerable speed. Alas ! Too much speed ! The corner at the bottom was too sharp. The cycle could not slow sufficiently to circle gracefully round. The danger and the horror of the situation had only begun to dawn upon me when there was a bump and a crash. The cycle mounted the bank ; the hedge was well padded, but one handle-bar connected with a branch, and the other connected (as I discovered later) with the top of my femur.

O quick impulse of fatal folly ! How exceedingly, like Saul, I had played the fool ! And here I was, wedged in the hedge, with an uncomfortable suspicion that my hip was broken. It could not, could not be ! Carefully I let myself down, and sat beside the bank.

A lorry passed and ignored me. A kind friend brought aid from the Franciscan community which I had disgraced by my impetuous moment of childishness. A broken femur was diagnosed probable. The foot lying on its right side revealed this to the discerning eye of the Bursar-Infirmarian. First a stretcher was used, but rotten from long inaction, it ripped under my weight. Next, a large door was brought, and novices and guests carried me, as if in a sedan chair, up the slope where my fatal folly was committed. Oh ! To be given back that last five minutes ! Oh, to undo what was done ! Mark well, reader. Folly is quick, punishment is long.

I was heavy to carry up the slope. They laid me down beside the road. Heavy at heart, I made a show of cheerfulness. A kind lady who makes habits for the friars, appeared with a parasol to shade me from the sun. A kind novice appeared with a tray of tea, to refresh both the victim and his helpers. The little gathering of people chatted and waited.

Quite soon an ambulance appeared. The kindly all-competent ambulance man alighted. ‘Oh !’ he said, ‘we would have come quicker if we’d known you were lying in the road . . . yes . . . that’s the classic position for a broken femur. I’m afraid I shall have to pull that leg’ (literally). He pulled and there was a click. Soon I was in the ambulance, gloomily moving towards Yeovil hospital.

O gentle reader ! Learn from my folly ! Never take chances with bicycles in country lanes. Never cycle down little hills so fast that you cannot control your machine. A bone is broken in a moment, but in late-middle-age it takes many weeks to heal. Modern medicine is wonderful, but do not learn its secrets from a mere whim ! Ride your cycle with wisdom and maturity, never be naughty, and use your brakes !

Wit with Malice

Ian Mackay wrote of Dean Inge, ‘He was always bold, clear, concise, cultivated, forceful, graceful, classical, eloquent and wrong’.

Books

How to Die

The Last Enemy. By Howard Guinness. Falcon Booklets, 35p.

The author is a doctor and a priest. He is an Englishman, but much of his ministry has been exercised in Australia, especially in recent years. A man of dedication, he is very much of the Conservative Evangelical, even Fundamentalist, school of thought ; and not all can be expected to share in his particular forms of spiritual experience and interpretation. His objective is to show to the believer—and the unbeliever—not only how to live but how to die.

The writer opens by telling how a number of years ago he was advised by another doctor that he was suffering from a serious disease and that the remainder of his life might well be short. However, he has lived on for a long time to write this book and has been free from the sickness until its recent return. He tells frankly of his sense of distress and frustration—yet he is able now to say 'thanks be to God'.

Those of whom he writes include a journalist, suffering from the same complaint, having no faith in God ; yet he dies in the faith of Christ,

strengthened by a knowledge of the Resurrection : a doctor, who has lost his faith and become an agnostic—he also regains his faith in Christ and dies in peace : a Methodist Minister, suffering from cancer, who believes that at one point of his illness, when almost dead, he has had a 'preview' of the glories of life hereafter, before returning to live again for a short time : a university student, first an atheist, who is won to the faith by the influence of Christian fellow students ; although he too suffers from cancer, he dies in a full faith : a university lecturer, an agnostic, who admits to having failed his wife—he comes to the faith gradually after a keen intellectual struggle. The book ends on a splendid note in the story of a young airman, a fine character and strong in his belief in the after life, soon to be killed in a crash.

Not all readers can be expected to find this little book helpful, but some in sickness or distress may gain peace and strength from it. It is worthy of close study and attention. MATTHEW S.S.F.

Deliverance

Exorcising Devils. By Dom Robert Petitpierre, O.S.B. Robert Hale, £3.95.

The Occult. By David Gillett. Church Pastoral Aid Society (Falcon Booklet), 30p.

The booklet on 'The Occult', by David Gillett, is an interesting study on the Evangelical approach to the Occult. To some extent it has its points and helpful to those who know very little if anything of the subject. His hypothesis regarding Astrology being a Polytheistic faith is untenable and there is some hysteria in the attitude to the subjects,

but such errors are outweighed by the merits in the warnings to those who dabble in the Occult, and being reasonably priced well within the reach of the average person.

The book on 'Exorcising Devils', by Dom Robert Petitpierre, is a serious study well worth reading especially by those active in this field. Due to the

increasing interest in the arts of Black magic and Witchcraft over the last decade, many have suffered terribly by their ignorance of the subjects and through dabbling in such matters. It is with no small thanks to men of Dom Petitpierre's calibre who are strong minded and logical enough that some people can live normal lives again who were plagued by diabolical interferences. This book, although not able to cover the subject adequately, gives sufficient insight into some causes and effects of certain psychic phenomena and what one should do. There are also several interesting chapters on the types of the spiritual powers, Ley lines and psychological deviations attendant in this field. A good note of extreme caution is evident (which is a necessary attribute in such matters) in the author's dealings with cases. As some practitioners of

exorcism have had to resort to other means for strength and power to overcome strange entities, one would have liked to see expressed more often the Glory given to God and Jesus Christ where the author has been instrumental in the deliverance of sufferers.

It is unfortunate as the author points out that some Churchmen and theologians have dismissed the ministry of healing and exorcism as pagan. However he rightly makes it clear that Christian deliverance is an essential part of the priest's ministry as Jesus Christ commanded his disciples to heal the sick and cast out demons and he presents the attitude and methods whereby this may be accomplished. This book contains helpful pastoral advice with the necessary prayers for use in this important area of Christ's ministry to the people.

JUSTIN S.S.F.

Dance and Drama

Praise Him In The Dance. By Anne Long.
Hodder and Stoughton, 1976, Paperback, £3.75.

This is a very practical guide for dance and drama groups within the church and elsewhere, wherever religious education is offered. The author has recognised, that the whole of ourselves should be offered in 'Our Praise to God'. We are not only to sing our praises to God, but also to dance them within the drama of our worship for God.

This book is written, 'for those amateurs who want to explore the possibilities of using drama and dance in the context of the Bible and its teaching. My hope is that it will provide guidelines and ideas for groups who want to work and learn together using these media. Some may want to dramatize a Bible narrative to include in a Sunday service, whilst others may want to discover ways of introducing

dances of praise into the pattern of church worship'.

A book full of good advice, especially on the emerging life of a group and its problems, of a personal and corporate nature which will arise, and have arisen in her experiences. We are provided with a good selection of suggested themes and sources, advice on the conduct of workshops and full length scripts offering us a solid basis for dramatic experiment and presentation.

A useful book for those preparing for and leading missions, a time when new ideas can be introduced, shared and which may be incorporated into the normal cycle of worship.

AELRED WILLIAM S.S.F.,
Novice.

Fresh Air

Love's Endeavour, Love's Expense : The Response of Being to the Love of God.

By W. H. Vanstone. Foreword by H. A. Williams C.R.

Darton, Longman and Todd, £2.95 net.

The publishers' blurb describes W. H. Vanstone as one of a brilliant post-war generation of Anglican theologians. He himself records how as a curate he found himself sent to build a church in a Northern town where he realised that the church would be unnecessary and irrelevant. Then suddenly, while walking in the parish, he says 'it was as if my world turned upside down ; or as if, having long been perplexed by looking at a picture upside down, I suddenly saw it the right way up, and understood it'.

This book, written after his retirement, is an account of what he saw and understood. In lovely lucid prose he explores the nature of the love of God and the response to that love in nature, in persons and in the Church. His exploration begins with an uncomfortable analysis of what prayer is *not*. 'A child hungry for love is most quick to detect and reject condescension, bribery or manipulation when it masquerades as love . . . though he has never tasted authentic love, he knows already the taste of what he needs'. The argument

is studded with luminous illustrations. 'Our preaching on the Sunday after the tragedy of Aberfan was not of a God Who from the top of the mountain caused or permitted for His own inscrutable reasons, its disruption and descent ; but of One Who received at the foot of the mountain its appalling impact, and Who in the extremity of endeavour will find yet new resources to restore and to redeem'.

Don't be disappointed if you find the final chapter dull—in the light of the glory of God the Church *is* dull ! On reflection I have come to see this chapter as the most demanding and exciting in a very exciting book.

Father Harry Williams says, 'It certainly leads us out to the fresh air'. Breathing this fresh air I have found my heart exhilarated by startling insights into the marvels of the love of God and compelled to new efforts of faithful, precarious and vulnerable response.

'May the power of your love, O Lord, enable me to die for love of your love. You who were so good as to die for love of my love'. DENIS S.S.F.

Way of Love

The Truth Will Make You Free. *By R. Voillaume.*

Darton, Longman and Todd, 1976, Paperback, £2.25.

One of the amazing joys of the Christian Movement, is that it continues to be nourished by lovers of men with new insights, new ways of expressing 'The Way of Love', of liberation to our contemporary society.

The central concern of this book is the liberation of man through love, to love. It consists of a series of letters, of a very practical nature, written by Frere

Voillaume whilst travelling the world meeting, sharing, listening and guiding the Little Brothers and Sisters, in which he sets out his understanding, of living and being the 'Gospel of love', of liberation within their particular situations, whether in Vietnam, Calcutta, Ethiopia, North and South America, the African continent, the Far East.

In these letters the author demon-

strates, as clearly as is possible, the true meaning of living the 'gospel of liberation', as a contemplative within the modern deserts of the city, and this within the stresses and strains, of the impersonalising effects of the expanding systems of non-growth. He says, 'I cannot help feeling angry with everything in the artificial world of ours which is destroying man : capitalism and socialism, the slavery of profit and the slavery of society and bureaucracy. Imprisonment in an ideology gives man only apparent freedom. Why do people wish to reduce everything and everyone to the sum mediocre level ? I wonder whether we shall ever put all this behind us and ask ourselves how can we let people grow and love in peace and freedom without enforced incorporation into a "system" ?'.

In the final section of the book 'The Gospel and Politics', the author stresses and points to the great importance of the vocation of Charles de Foucauld for the world today. The whole book illustrates the concern of the author on the meaning of the call of the Gospel, in whatever political, social or cultural situations people may find themselves.

All who care about the other person in every person, and who are seeking fulfilment in service one to another, whatever his or her situation will find much in these agonising letters, to ponder over and respond according to their specific call to be lovers of *all* man.

AELRED WILLIAM S.S.F.,
Novice.

Those Who Suffer

Opium of the People. By Michael Bourdeaux. Mowbrays, £2.75.

'Man is not made simply to go about being safe and comfortable, and well-fed and amused. Against his interest, against his happiness, he is constantly being driven to do unreasonable things'. One of these unreasonable things in much of the world today is to believe. A person that really believes is the most dangerous being there is. He is the one sighted man in a crowd of the blind. He is the only free man.

To those who believe in the progress in maturity of mankind as a whole the most depressing thing about our decade is the spread of repression and its deepening. From Czechoslovakia onwards every intimation of Spring has been snuffed out by cold winds. First Chile is in the news, then Iran ; Cambodia and South Africa. Even worse is the realisation that tyrannies of the left and right look much alike ; it is the same type of people who suffer under both, the same

person who profits from both.

Mowbrays have now brought out a second edition of Michael Bourdeaux book. It first came out in 1965 but, as those who follow the sufferings of Christians in the U.S.S.R. can tell, it has not become at all outdated.

Read it, if you have not done so already ; learn of the fascinating history of the Russian church, of the sufferings of believers in the U.S.S.R. today, of the cruelty and the heroism, the spite and the love that can be showed by humankind to their own, then write to Keston College, Keston, Kent for more information about what you can do to help your fellow believers. One request made again and again by Russian Christians is that we should be fully informed of all that is happening, and that we should pray for them. At least we can do that.

A BROTHER S.S.F.

Sharing Faith

'The Truth Will Make You Free' (Letters to the Little Brothers).

By René Voillaume. Darton, Longman and Todd, £2.25.

This book is in two parts, the first comprising extracts from letters by the author to the Little Brothers. These consist of reflections on the demands of living the Gospel in a wide variety of places throughout the world which range from Vietnam and Calcutta, with their suffering and destitution, and the problems presented by living in societies with a non-Christian religion, to the politically turbulent places of Central and South America. While these will be beyond the experience of most of us there are many correlations with our own society today. Also these writings are so rooted in Christ and Christian spirituality that the insights given have value for all who are concerned to express a Christian life-style where they are. They display a way of seeing what is necessary, what the underlying things should be in making an authentic witness to the basic truths of our religion in whatever society they are lived out.

The second part of the book entitled 'The Gospel and Politics', complements and brings together the themes of the first part. To write on how 'the People of God exercise their responsibility in the earthly city' is no easy task. René Voillaume has avoided admirably the pitfall of over-simplifying the human complexities involved and of equating the gospel with any political or social system or philosophy. With sensitivity and integrity he has shown why involvement with the political and cultural circumstances prevailing is necessary, bringing to them our experience and message on human liberty, brotherhood and destiny, thereby being a challenge and leaven of the Kingdom.

Although, sometimes, René Voillaume expresses his spirituality in ways some of us will find strange, I warmly commend this book to anyone still seeking ways of sharing their faith in the society in which they live.

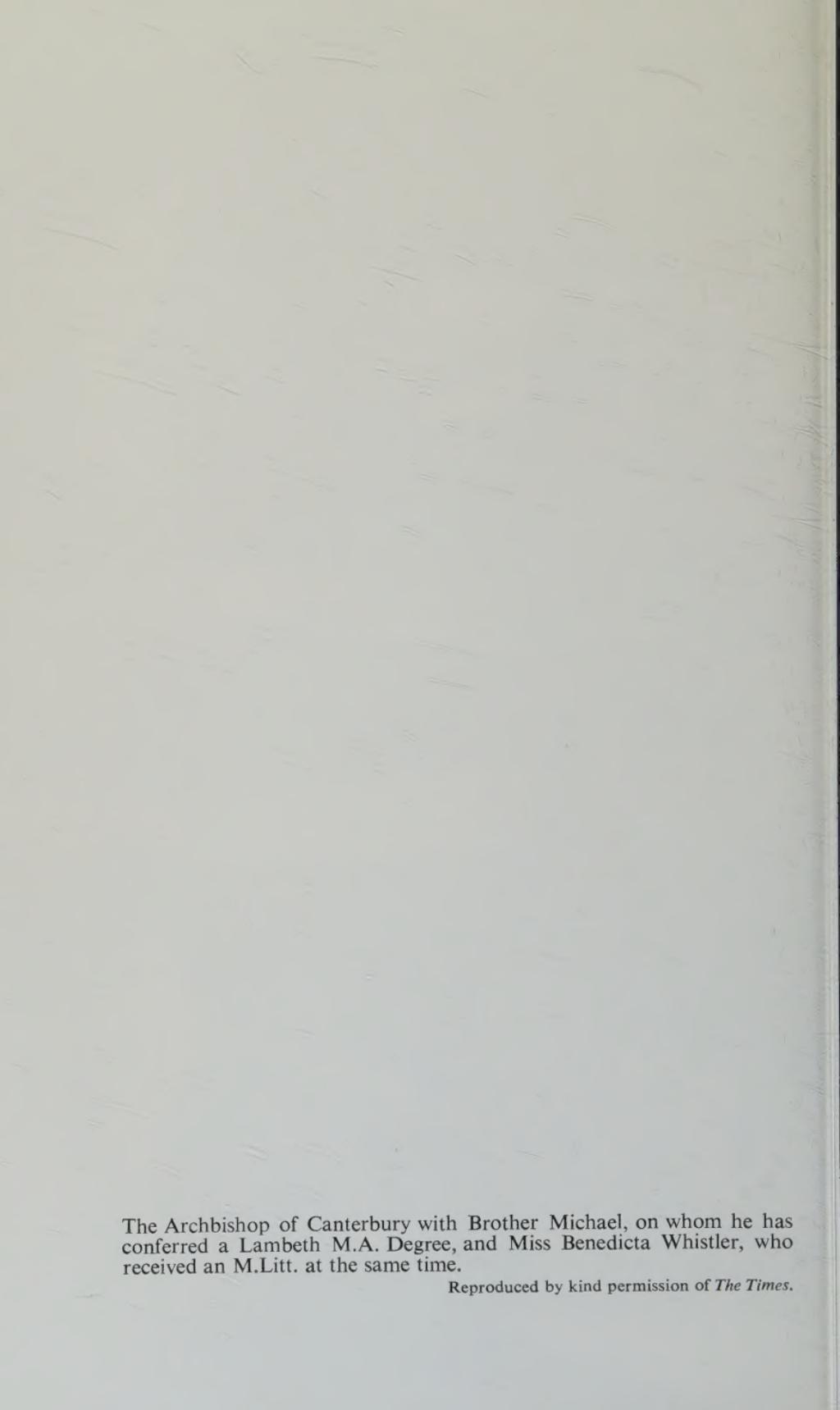
VICTOR S.S.F.

Books Received

The Reviews Editor gratefully acknowledges the receipt of the following publications :—

The Ladder of Monks, by Guigo II, Mowbray ; *Suffering, Innocent and Guilty*, by Elizabeth Moberly, S.P.C.K. ; *A Year Book of Saints*, by Christine Chaundler, Mowbray ; *Church, Papacy and Schism*, by Philip Sherrard, S.P.C.K. ; *The Meaning and End of Religion*, by W. C. Smith, S.P.C.K. ; *The Wisdom of S. Francis and His Companions*, by Stephen Clissold, Sheldon ; *Rediscovering the Bible*, by Lucas Grollenberg, S.C.M. ; *God and Women*, by Dorothy Pape, Mowbray ; *Orthodox Spirituality*, by A Monk, S.P.C.K. ; *The Study of Liturgy*, editors—C. Jones, G. Wainwright and E. Yarnold S.J., S.P.C.K. ; *East and West of Aldgate Pump*, by Phil Mason, Privately ; *Living Words For Now*, by Tony Jasper, S.P.C.K. ; *On Preaching*, by Donald Coggan, S.P.C.K. ; *On the Love of God*, by Bernard of Clairvaux, Mowbray ; *The Reasons of the Heart*, by John S. Dunne, S.C.M.





The Archbishop of Canterbury with Brother Michael, on whom he has conferred a Lambeth M.A. Degree, and Miss Benedicta Whistler, who received an M.Litt. at the same time.

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